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HUGH

But there is more than I can see,
And what I see I leave unsaid,
Nor speak it, knowing Death has made
His darkness beautiful with thee.

Photo by Sarony, New York

Robert Hugh Benson.

IN 1912. AGED 40

In the robes of a Papal Chamberlain

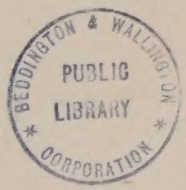
HUGH

MEMOIRS OF A BROTHER

BY

ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.
1920

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PREFACE

This book was begun with no hope or intention of making a formal and finished biography, but only to place on record some of my brother's sayings and doings, to fix scenes and memories before they suffered from any dim obliteration of time, to catch, if I could, for my own comfort and delight, the tone and sense of that vivid and animated atmosphere which Hugh always created about him. His arrival upon any scene was never in the smallest degree uproarious, and still less was it in the least mild or serene; yet he came into a settled circle like a freshet of tumbling water into a still pool!

I knew all along that I could not attempt any account of what may be called his public life, which all happened since he became a Roman Catholic. He passed through many circles—in England, in Rome, in America—of which I knew nothing. I never heard him make a public speech, and I only once heard

him preach since he ceased to be an Anglican. This was not because I thought he would convert me, nor because I shrank from hearing him preach a doctrine to which I did not adhere, nor for any sectarian reason. Indeed, I regret not having heard him preach and speak oftener; it would have interested me, and it would have been kinder and more brotherly; but one is apt not to do the things which one thinks one can always do, and the fact that I did not hear him was due to a mixture of shyness and laziness, which I now regret in vain.

But I think that his life as a Roman Catholic ought to be written fully and carefully, because there were many people who trusted and admired and loved him as a priest who would wish to have some record of his days. He left me, by a will, which we are carrying out, though it was not duly executed, all his letters, papers, and manuscripts, and we have arranged to have an official biography of him written, and have placed all his papers in the hands of a Catholic biographer, Father C. C. Martindale, S.J.

Since Hugh died I have read a good many

notices of him, which have appeared mostly in Roman Catholic organs. These were, as a rule, written by people who had only known him as a Catholic, and gave an obviously incomplete view of his character and temperament. It could not well have been otherwise, but the result was that only one side of a very varied and full life was presented. He was depicted in a particular office and in a specific mood. This was certainly his most real and eager mood, and deserves to be emphasized. But he had other moods and other sides, and his life before he became a Catholic had a charm and a vigour of its own.

Moreover, his family affection was very strong; when he became a Catholic, we all of us felt, including himself, that there might be a certain separation, not of affection, but of occupations and interests; and he himself took very great care to avoid this, with the happy result that we saw him, I truly believe, more often and more intimately than even before. Indeed, my own close companionship with him really began when he came first as a Roman Catholic to Cambridge.

And so I have thought it well to draw in broad strokes and simple outlines a picture of his personality as we, his family, knew and loved it. It is only a *study*, so to speak, and is written very informally and directly. Formal biographies, as I know from experience, must emphasize a different aspect. They deal, as they are bound to do, with public work and official activities; and the personal atmosphere often vanishes in the process—that subtle essence of quality, the effect of a man's talk and habits and prejudices and predispositions, which comes out freely in private life, and is even suspended in his public ministrations. It would be impossible, I believe, to make a presentment of Hugh which could be either dull or conventional. But, on the other hand, his life as a priest, a writer, a teacher, a controversialist, was to a certain extent governed and conditioned by circumstances; and I can see, from many accounts of him, that the more intimate and unrestrained side of him can only be partially discerned by those who knew him merely in an official capacity.

That, then, is the history of this brief

Memoir. It is just an attempt to show Hugh as he showed himself, freely and unaffectedly, to his own circle; and I am sure that this deserves to be told, for the one characteristic which emerges whenever I think of him is that of a beautiful charm, not without a touch of wilfulness and even petulance about it, which gave him a childlike freshness, a sparkling zest, that aerated and enlivened all that he did or said. It was a charm which made itself instantly felt, and yet it could be hardly imitated or adopted, because it was so entirely unconscious and unaffected. He enjoyed enacting his part, and he was as instinctively and wholeheartedly a priest as another man is a soldier or a lawyer. But his function did not wholly occupy and dominate his life; and, true priest though he was, the force and energy of his priesthood came at least in part from the fact that he was entirely and delightfully human, and I deeply desire that this should not be overlooked or forgotten.

A. C. B.

TREMANS, HORSTED KEYNES,
December 26, 1914.

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"Then said *Great-heart* to Mr. *Valiant-for-Truth*, Thou hast worthily behaved thyself. Let me see thy Sword. So he shewed it him. When he had taken it in his hand, and looked thereon a while, he said, *Ha, it is a right Jerusalem Blade!*"

The Pilgrim's Progress.

HUGH

I

HARE STREET

How loudly and boisterously the wind roared to-day across the low-hung, cloud-smeared sky, driving the broken rack before it, warm and wet out of the south! What a wintry landscape! leafless trees bending beneath the onset of the wind, bare and streaming hedges, pale close-reaped wheat-fields, brown ploughland, spare pastures stretching away to left and right, softly rising and falling to the horizon; nothing visible but distant belts of trees and coverts, with here and there the tower of a hidden church overtopping them, and a windmill or two; on the left, long lines of willows marking the course of a stream. The road soaked with rain, the grasses heavy with it, hardly a human being to be seen.

I came at last to a village straggling along

each side of the road; to the right, a fantastic-looking white villa, with many bow-windows, and an orchard behind it. Then on the left, a great row of beeches on the edge of a pasture; and then, over the barns and ricks of a farm, rose the clustered chimneys of an old house; and soon we drew up at a big iron gate between tall red-brick gateposts; beyond it a paling, with a row of high lime-trees bordering a garden lawn, and on beyond that the irregular village street.

From the gate a little flagged pathway leads up to the front of a long, low house, of mellow brick, with a solid cornice and parapet, over which the tiled roof is visible: a door in the centre, with two windows on each side and five windows above—just the sort of house that you would find in a cathedral close. To the left of the iron gate are two other tall gateposts, with a road leading up to the side of the house, and a yard with a row of stables behind.

Let me describe the garden first. All along the front and south side of the house runs a flagged pathway, a low brick wall dividing

Photo by Bishop, Barkway

HARE STREET HOUSE FROM THE FRONT, 1914

The room to the left of the door is the dining-room, with Hugh's bedroom over it. To the right of the door is the library.

Photo by Bishop, Barkway

HARE STREET HOUSE FROM THE GARDEN, 1914

The timbered building on the left is the chapel; in the foreground is the unfinished rose-garden.

it from the lawn, with plants in rough red pots on little pilasters at intervals. To the right, as we face the door, the lawn runs along the road, and stretches back into the garden. There are tall, lopped lime-trees all round the lawn, in the summer making a high screen of foliage, but now bare. If we take the flagged path round the house, turn the corner, and go towards the garden, the yew-trees grow thick and close, forming an arched walk at the corner, half screening an old irregular building of woodwork and plaster, weather-boarded in places, with a tiled roof, connected with the house by a little covered cloister with wooden pillars. If we pass that by, pursuing the path among the yew-trees, we come out on a pleasant orchard, with a few flower-beds, thickly encircled by shrubs, beyond which, towards the main road, lies a comfortable-looking old red-brick cottage, with a big barn and a long garden, which evidently belongs to the larger house, because a gate in the paling stands open. Then there is another little tiled building behind the shrubs, where you can hear an engine at work, for electric light and water-pumping,

and beyond that again, but still connected with the main house, stands another house among trees, of rough-cast and tiles, with an open wooden gallery, in a garden of its own.

In the orchard itself is a large grass-grown mound, with a rough wooden cross on the top; and down below that, in the orchard, is a newly-made grave, still covered, as I saw it to-day, with wreaths of leaves and moss, tied some of them with stained purple ribbons. The edge of the grave-mound is turfed, but the bare and trodden grass shows that many feet have crossed and recrossed the ground.

The orchard is divided on the left from a further and larger garden by a dense growth of old hazels; and passing through an alley you see that a broad path runs concealed among the hazels, a pleasant shady walk in summer heat. Then the larger garden stretches in front of you; it is a big place, with rows of vegetables, fruit-trees, and flower-borders, screened to the east by a row of elms and dense shrubberies of laurel. Along the north runs a high red-brick wall, with a big old-fashioned vine-house in the centre, of careful design. In the corner

nearest the house is a large rose-garden, with a brick pedestal in the centre, behind which rises the back of the stable, also of old red brick.

But now there is a surprise; the back of the house is much older than the front. You see that it is a venerable Tudor building, with pretty panels of plaster embossed with a rough pattern. The moulded brick chimney-stacks are Tudor too, while the high gables cluster and lean together with a picturesque outline. The back of the house forms a little court, with the cloister of which I spoke before running round two sides of it. Another great yew-tree stands there: while a doorway going into the timber and plaster building which I mentioned before has a rough device on it of a papal tiara and keys, carved in low relief and silvered.

A friendly black collie comes out of a kennel and desires a little attention. He licks my hand and looks at me with melting brown eyes, but he has an air of expecting to see someone else as well. A black cat comes out of a door, runs beside us, and when picked up,

clasps my shoulder contentedly and purrs in my ear.

The house seen from the back looks exactly what it is, a little old family mansion of a line of small squires, who farmed their own land, and lived on their own produce, though the barns and rick-yard belong to the house no longer. The red-brick front is just an addition made for the sake of stateliness at some time of prosperity. It is a charming self-contained little place, with a forgotten family tradition of its own, a place which could twine itself about the heart, and be loved and remembered by children brought up there, when far away. There is no sign of wealth about it, but every sign of ease and comfort and simple dignity.

Now we will go back to the front door and go through the house itself. The door opens into a tiny hall lighted by the glass panes of the door, and bright with pictures—oil paintings and engravings. The furniture old and sturdy, and a few curiosities about—carvings, weapons, horns of beasts. To the left a door opens into a pleasant dining-room, with

two windows looking out in front, dark as dining-rooms may well be. It is hung with panels of green cloth, it has a big open Tudor fireplace, with a big oak settle, some china on an old dresser, a solid table and chairs, and a hatch in the corner through which dishes can be handed.

Opposite, on the other side of the hall, a door opens into a long low library, with books all round in white shelves. There is a big grand piano here, a very solid narrow oak table with a chest below, a bureau, and some comfortable chintz-covered chairs with a deep sofa. A perfect room to read or to hear music in, with its two windows to the front, and a long window opening down to the ground at the south end. All the books here are catalogued, and each has its place. If you go out into the hall again and pass through, a staircase goes up into the house, the walls of it panelled, and hung with engravings; some of the panels are carved with holy emblems. At the foot of the stairs a door on the right takes you into a small sitting-room, with a huge stone fireplace; a big window looks

south, past the dark yew-trees, on to the lawn. There are little devices in the quarries of the window, and a deep window-seat. The room is hung with a curious tapestry, brightly coloured mediæval figures standing out from a dark background. There is not room for much furniture here; a square oak stand for books, a chair or two by the fire. Parallel to the wall, with a chair behind it filling up much of the space, is a long, solid old oak table, set out for writing. It is a perfect study for quiet work, warm in winter with its log fire, and cool in summer heat.

To the left of the staircase a door goes into a roughly panelled ante-room which leads out on to the cloister, and beyond that a large stone-flagged kitchen, with offices beyond.

If you go upstairs, you find a panelled corridor, with bedrooms. The one over the study is small and dark, and said to be haunted. That over the library is a big pleasant room with a fine marble fireplace—a boudoir once, I should think. Over the hall is another dark panelled room with a four-post

bed, the walls hung with a most singular and rather terrible tapestry, representing a dance of death.

Beyond that, over the dining-room, is a beautiful panelled room, with a Tudor fireplace, and a bed enclosed by blue curtains. This was Hugh's own room. Out of it opens a tiny dressing-room. Beyond that is another large low room over the kitchen, which has been half-study half-bedroom, out of which opens a little stairway going to some little rooms beyond over the offices.

Above that again are some quaint whitewashed attics with dormers and leaning walls; one or two of these are bedrooms. One, very large and long, runs along most of the front, and has a curious leaden channel in it a foot above the floor to take the rain-water off the leads of the roof. Out of another comes a sweet smell of stored apples, which revives the memory of childish visits to farm storerooms—and here stands a pretty and quaint old pipe-organ awaiting renovation.

We must retrace our steps to the building at the back to which the cloister leads. We

enter a little sacristy and vestry, and beyond is a dark chapel, with a side-chapel opening out of it. It was originally an old brew-house, with a timbered roof. The sanctuary is now divided off by a high open screen, of old oak, reaching nearly to the roof. The whole place is full of statues, carved and painted, embroidered hangings, stained glass, pendent lamps, emblems; there is a gallery over the sacristy, with an organ, and a fine piece of old embroidery displayed on the gallery front.

This is the house in which for seven years my brother Hugh lived. Let me recall how he first came to see it. He was at Cambridge then, working as an assistant priest. He became aware that his work lay rather in the direction of speaking, preaching, and writing, and resolved to establish himself in some quiet country retreat. One summer I visited several houses in Hertfordshire with him, but they proved unsuitable. One of these possessed an extraordinary attraction for him. It was in a bleak remote village, and it was a fine old house which had fallen from its high estate. It stood on the road and was used as a grocer's

shop. It was much dilapidated, and there was little ground about it, but inside there were old frescoes and pictures, strange plaster friezes and moulded ceilings, which had once been brightly coloured. But nothing would have made it a really attractive house, in spite of the curious beauty of its adornment.

One day I was returning alone from an excursion, and passed by what we call accident through Hare Street, the village which I have described. I caught a glimpse of the house through the iron gates, and saw that there was a board up saying it was for sale. A few days later I went there with Hugh. It was all extremely desolate, but we found a friendly caretaker who led us round. The shrubberies had grown into dense plantations, the orchard was a tangled waste of grass, the garden was covered with weeds. I remember Hugh's exclamation of regret that we had visited the place. "It is *exactly* what I want," he said, "but it is *far* too expensive. I wish I had never set eyes on it!" However, he found that it had long been unlet, and that no one would buy it. He might

have had the pasture-land and the farm-buildings as well, and he afterwards regretted that he had not bought them, but his income from writing was still small. However, he offered what seems to me now an extraordinarily low sum for the house and garden; it was to his astonishment at once accepted. It was all going to ruin, and the owner was glad to get rid of it on any terms. He established himself there with great expedition, and set to work to renovate the place. At a later date he bought the adjacent cottage, and the paddock in which he built the other house, and he also purchased some outlying fields, one a charming spot on the road to Buntingford, with some fine old trees, where he had an idea of building a church.

Everything in the little domain took shape under his skilful hand and ingenious brain. He made most of the tapestries in the house with his own fingers, working with his friend Mr. Gabriel Pippet the artist. He carved much of the panelling—he was extraordinarily clever with his hands. He painted many of the pictures which hang on the walls, he

catalogued the library; he worked day after day in the garden, weeding, mowing, and planting. In all this he had the advantage of the skill, capacity, and invention of his factotum and friend, Mr. Joseph Reeman, who could turn his hand to anything and everything with equal energy and taste; and so the whole place grew and expanded in his hands, until there is hardly a detail, indoors or out-of-doors, which does not show some trace of his fancy and his touch.

There were some strange old traditions about the house; it was said to be haunted, and more than one of his guests had inexplicable experiences there. It was also said that there was a hidden treasure concealed in or about it. That treasure Hugh certainly discovered, in the delight which he took in restoring, adorning, and laying it all out. It was a source of constant joy to him in his life. And there, in the midst of it all, his body lies.

II

CHILDHOOD

I VERY well remember the sudden appearance of Hugh in the nursery world, and being conducted into a secluded dressing-room, adjacent to the nursery, where the tiny creature lay, lost in contented dreams, in a big, white-draped, white-hooded cradle. It was just a rather pleasing and exciting event to us children, not particularly wonderful or remarkable. It was at Wellington College that he was born, in the Master's Lodge, in a sunny bedroom, in the south-east corner of the house; one of its windows looking to the south front of the college and the chapel with its slender spire; the other window looking over the garden and a waste of heather beyond, to the fir-crowned hill of Ambarrow. My father had been Headmaster for twelve years and was nearing the end of his time there; and I was myself nine years old, and shortly to go

Photo by Hills & Saunders

THE MASTER'S LODGE, WELLINGTON COLLEGE, 1868

The room to the left of the porch is the study. In the room above it Hugh was born.

to a private school, where my elder brother Martin already was. My two sisters, Nelly and Maggie, were respectively eight and six, and my other brother, Fred, was four—six in all.

And by a freak of memory I recollect, too, that at breakfast on the following morning my father—half-shyly, half-proudly, I thought—announced the fact of Hugh's birth to the boys whom he had asked in, as his custom was, to breakfast, and how they offered embarrassed congratulations, not being sure, I suppose, exactly what the right phrase was.

Then came the christening, which took place at Sandhurst Church, a mile or two away, to which we walked by the pine-clad hill of Edgebarrow and the heathery moorland known as Cock-a-Dobbie. Mr. Parsons was the clergyman—a little handsome old man, like an abbé, with a clear-cut face and thick white hair. I am afraid that the ceremony had no religious significance for me at that time, but I was deeply interested, thought it rather cruel, and was shocked at Hugh's indecorous outcry. He was called Robert, an old family name, and Hugh, in honour of St. Hugh of Lincoln,

where my father was a Prebendary, and because he was born on the day before St. Hugh's Feast. And then I really remember nothing more of him for a time, except for a scene in the nursery on some wet afternoon when the baby—Robin as he was at first called—insisted on being included in some game of tents made by pinning shawls over the tops of chairs, he being then, as always, perfectly clear what his wishes were, and equally clear that they were worth attending to and carrying out.

Then I vividly recall how in 1875, when we were all returning *en famille* from a long summer holiday spent at Torquay in a pleasant house lent us in Meadfoot Bay, we all travelled together in a third-class carriage; how it fell to my lot to have the amusing of Hugh, and how difficult he was to amuse, because he wished to look out of the window the whole time, and to make remarks on everything. But at Lincoln I hardly remember anything of him at all, because I was at school with my elder brother, and only came back for the holidays; and we two had moreover a little sanctum of our own, a small sitting-room

named Bec by my father, who had a taste for pleasant traditions, after Anthony Bec, the warlike Bishop of Durham, who had once been Chancellor of Lincoln. Here we arranged our collections and attended to our own concerns, hardly having anything to do with the nursery life, except to go to tea there and to play games in the evening. The one thing I do remember is that Hugh would under no circumstances and for no considerations ever consent to go into a room in the dark by himself, being extremely imaginative and nervous; and that on one occasion when he was asked what he expected to befall him, he said with a shudder and a stammer: "To fall over a mangled corpse, squish! into a pool of gore!"

When he was between four and five years old, at Lincoln, one of his godfathers, Mr. Penny, an old friend and colleague of my father's at Wellington College, came to stay at the Chancery, and brought Hugh a Bible. My mother was sitting with Mr. Penny in the drawing-room after luncheon, when Hugh, in a little black velvet suit, his flaxen hair brushed till it gleamed with radiance, his face the

picture of innocence, bearing the Bible, a very image of early piety, entered the room, and going up to his godfather, said with his little stammer: "Tha-a-ank you, Godpapa, for this beautiful Bible! will you read me some of it?"

Mr. Penny beamed with delight, and took the Bible. My mother rose to leave the room, feeling almost unworthy of being present at so sacred an interview, but as she reached the door, she heard Mr. Penny say: "And what shall I read about?" "The De-e-evil!" said Hugh without the least hesitation. My mother closed the door and came back.

There was one member of our family circle for whom Hugh did undoubtedly cherish a very deep and tender affection from the time when his affections first awoke—this was for the beloved Beth, the old family nurse. Beth became nursemaid to my grandmother, Mrs. Sidgwick, as a young girl; and the first of her nurslings, whom she tended through an attack of smallpox, catching the complaint herself, was my uncle, William Sidgwick, still alive as a vigorous octogenarian. Henry Sidgwick, Arthur Sidgwick, and my mother

Photo by R. Slingsby, Lincoln

AT THE CHANCERY, LINCOLN

IN 1876. AGED 5

were all under Beth's care. Then she came on with my mother to Wellington College and nursed us all with the simplest and sweetest goodness and devotion. For Hugh, as the last of her "children," she had the tenderest love, and lavished her care, and indeed her money, on him. When we were all dispersed for a time after my father's death, Beth went to her Yorkshire relations, and pined away in separation from her dear ones. Hugh returned alone and earlier than the rest, and Beth could bear it no longer, but came up from Yorkshire just to get a glimpse of Hugh at a station in London as he passed through, had a few words with him and a kiss, and gave him some little presents which she thought he might like, returning to Yorkshire tired out but comforted. I have always thought that little journey one of the most touching and beautiful acts of love and service I have ever heard of. She was nearly eighty at the time.

In early days she watched over Hugh, did anything and everything for him; when he got older she used to delight to wait on him,

to pack and unpack for him, to call him in the mornings, and secretly to purchase clothes and toilet articles to replace anything worn out or lost. In later days the thought that he was coming home used to make her radiant for days before. She used to come tapping at my door before dinner, and sit down for a little talk. "I know what you are thinking about, Beth!" "What is it, dear?" "Why, about Hugh, of course! You don't care for anyone else when he is coming." "No, don't say that, dear—but I *am* pleased to think that Master Hugh is coming home for a bit—I hope he won't be very tired!" And she used to smooth down her apron with her toil-worn hands and beam to herself at the prospect. He always went and sat with her for a little in the evenings, in her room full of all the old nursery treasures, and imitated her smilingly. "Nay, now, child! I've spoken, and that is enough!" he used to say, while she laughed for delight. She used to say farewell to him with tears, and wave her handkerchief at the window till the carriage was out of sight. Even in her last long illness,

as she faded out of life, at over ninety years of age, she was made perfectly happy by the thought that he was in the house, and only sorry that she could not look after his things.

Beth had had but little education; she could read a little in a well-known book, but writing was always a slow and difficult business; but she used slowly to compile a little letter from time to time to Hugh, and I find the following put away among the papers of his Eton days and schoolboy correspondence:

ADDINGTON PARK,
[? *Nov.* 1887] *Tuesday.*

DEAREST,—One line to tell you I am sending your Box to-morrow Wednesday. I hope you will get it before tea-time. I know you will like something for tea, you can keep your cake for your Birthday. I shall think about you on Friday. Everybody has gone away, so I had no one to write for me. I thought you would not mind me writing to you.—Dearest love from your dear BETH.

The dear Beth lived wholly in love and

service ; she loved just as she worked, endlessly and ungrudgingly ; wherever Beth is, she will find service to render and children to love ; and I cannot think that she has not found the way to her darling, and he to her.

III

TRURO

We all went off again to Truro in 1877, when my father was made Bishop. The tradition was that as the train, leaving Lincoln, drew up after five minutes at the first small station on the line, perhaps Navenby, a little voice in the corner said: "Is this Truro?" A journey by train was for many years a great difficulty for Hugh, as it always made him ill, owing to the motion of the carriage.

At Truro he becomes a much more definite figure in my recollections. He was a delicately made, light-haired, blue-eyed child, looking rather angelic in a velvet suit, and with small, neat feet, of which he was supposed to be unduly aware. He had at that time all sorts of odd tricks, winkings and twitchings; and one very aggravating habit, in walking, of putting his feet together suddenly, stopping and looking down at them, while he muttered to himself the

mystic formula, "Knuck, Nunks." But one thing about him was very distinct indeed, that he was entirely impervious to the public opinion of the nursery, and could neither be ridiculed nor cajoled out of continuing to do anything he chose to do. He did not care the least what was said, nor had he any morbid fears, as I certainly had as a child, of being disliked or mocked at. He went his own way, knew what he wanted to do, and did it.

My recollections of him are mainly of his extreme love of argument and the adroitness with which he conducted it. He did not intend to be put upon as the youngest, and it was supposed that if he was ever told to do anything, he always replied: "Why shouldn't Fred?" He invented an ingenious device which he once, and once only, practised with success, of goading my brother Fred by petty shafts of domestic insult into pursuing him, bent on vengeance. Hugh had prepared some small pieces of folded paper with a view to this contingency, and as Fred gave chase, Hugh flung two of his papers on the ground, being sure that Fred would stop to

examine them. The ruse was quite successful, and while Fred was opening the papers, Hugh sought sanctuary in the nursery. Sometimes my sisters were deputed to do a lesson with him. My elder sister Nelly had a motherly instinct, and enjoyed a small responsibility. She would explain a rule of arithmetic to Hugh. He would assume an expression of despair: "I don't understand a word of it—you go so quick." Then it would be explained again: "Now do you understand?" "Of course I understand *that*." "Very well, do a sum." The sum would begin: "Oh, don't push me—don't come so near—I don't like having my face blown on." Presently my sister with angelic patience would show him a mistake. "Oh, don't interfere—you make it all mixed up in my head." Then he would be let alone for a little. Then he would put the slate down with an expression of despair and resignation; if my sister took no notice he would say: "I thought Mamma told you to help me in my sums? How can I understand without having it explained to me?"

It was impossible to get the last word; indeed he used to give my sister Maggie, when she taught him, what he called "Temper-tickets," at the end of the lesson; and on one occasion, when he was to repeat a Sunday collect to her, he was at last reported to my mother, as being wholly intractable. This was deeply resented; and after my sister had gone to bed, a small piece of paper was pushed in beneath her door, on which was written: "The most unhappiest Sunday I ever spent in my life. Whose fault?"

Again, when Maggie had found him extremely cross and tiresome one morning in the lessons she was taking, she discovered, when Hugh at last escaped, a piece of paper on the schoolroom table, on which he had written:

"Passionate Magey
Toodle Ha! Ha!
The old gose."

There was another story of how he was asked to write out a list of the things he wanted, with a view to a birthday that was coming. The list ended:

"A little compenshion goat, and
A tiny-winy train, and
A nice little pen."

The diminutives were evidently intended to give the requirements a modest air. As for "compenshion," he had asked what some nursery animal was made of, a fracture having displayed a sort of tough fibrous plaster. He was told that it was made of "a composition."

We used to play many rhyming games at that time; and Hugh at the age of eight wrote a poem about a swarm of gnats dancing in the sun, which ended:

> "And when they see their comrades laid
> In thousands round the garden glade,
> They know they were not really made
> To live for evermore."

In one of these games, each player wrote a question which was to be answered by some other player in a poem; Hugh, who had been talked to about the necessity of overcoming some besetting sin in Lent, wrote with perfect good faith as his question, "What is your sin for Lent?"

As a child, and always throughout his life, he was absolutely free from any touch of priggishness or precocious piety. He com-

plained once to my sister that when he was taken out walks by his elders, he heard about nothing but "poetry and civilisation." In a friendly little memoir of him, which I have been sent, I find the following passage: "In his early childhood, when reason was just beginning to ponder over the meaning of things, he was so won to enthusiastic admiration of the heroes and heroines of the Catholic Church that he decided he would probe for himself the Catholic claims, and the child would say to the father, 'Father, if there be such a sacrament as Penance, can I go?' And the good Archbishop, being evasive in his answers, the young boy found himself emerging more and more in a woeful Nemesis of faith." It would be literally *impossible*, I think, to construct a story less characteristic both of Hugh's own attitude of mind as well as of the atmosphere of our family and household life than this!

He was always very sensitive to pain and discomfort. On one occasion, when his hair was going to be cut, he said to my mother: "Mayn't I have chloroform for it?"

And my mother has described to me a journey which she once took with him abroad when he was a small boy. He was very ill on the crossing, and they had only just time to catch the train. She had some luncheon with her, but he said that the very mention of food made him sick. She suggested that she should sit at the far end of the carriage and eat her own lunch, while he shut his eyes; but he said that the mere sound of crumpled paper made him ill, and then that the very idea that there was food in the carriage upset him; so that my mother had to get out on the first stop and bolt her food on the platform.

One feat of Hugh's I well remember. Sir James McGarel Hogg, afterwards Lord Magheramorne, was at the time member for Truro. He was a stately and kindly old gentleman, pale-faced and white-bearded, with formal and dignified manners. He was lunching with us one day, and gave his arm to my mother to conduct her to the dining-room. Hugh, for some reason best known to himself, selected that day to secrete himself in the dining-room beforehand, and burst out upon Sir James

with a wild howl, intended to create consternation. Neither then nor ever was he embarrassed by inconvenient shyness.

The Bishop's house at Truro, Lis Escop, had been the rectory of the rich living of Kenwyn; it was bought for the see and added to. It was a charming house about a mile out of Truro above a sequestered valley, with a far-off view of the little town lying among hills, with the smoke going up, and the gleaming waters of the estuary enfolded in the uplands beyond. The house had some acres of pasture-land about it and some fine trees; with a big garden and shrubberies, an orchard and a wood. We were all very happy there, save for the shadow of my eldest brother's death as a Winchester boy in 1878. I was an Eton boy myself and thus was only there in the holidays; we lived a very quiet life, with few visitors; and my recollection of the time there is one of endless games and schemes and amusements. We had writing games and drawing games, and acted little plays.

We children had a mysterious secret society, with titles and offices and ceremonies: an old

alcoved arbour in the garden, with a seat running round it, and rough panelling behind, was the chapter-house of the order. There were robes and initiations and a book of proceedings. Hugh held the undistinguished office of Servitor, and his duties were mainly those of a kind of acolyte. I think he somewhat enjoyed the meetings, though the difficulty was always to discover any purpose for which the society existed. There were subscriptions and salaries; and to his latest day it delighted him to talk of the society, and to point out that his salary had never equalled his subscription.

There were three or four young clergy, Arthur Mason, now Canon of Canterbury, G. H. Whitaker, since Canon of Hereford, John Reeve, late Rector of Lambeth, G. H. S. Walpole, now Bishop of Edinburgh, who had come down with my father, and they were much in the house. My father himself was full of energy and hopefulness, and loved Cornwall with an almost romantic love. But in all of this Hugh was too young to take much part. Apart from school hours he was

a quick, bright, clever child, wanting to take his part in everything. My brother Fred and I were away at school, or later at the University; and the home circle, except for the holidays, consisted of my father and mother, my two sisters, and Hugh. My father had been really prostrated with grief at the death of my eldest brother, who was a boy of quite extraordinary promise and maturity of mind. My father was of a deeply affectionate and at the same time anxious disposition; he loved family life, but he had an almost tremulous sense of his parental responsibility. I have never known anyone in my life whose personality was so strongly marked as my father's. He had a superhuman activity, and cared about everything to which he put his hand with an intensity and an enthusiasm that was almost overwhelming. At the same time he was extremely sensitive; and this affected him in a curious way. A careless word from one of us, some tiny instance of childish selfishness or lack of affection, might distress him out of all proportion. He would brood over such things, make himself unhappy, and at

the same time feel it his duty to correct what he felt to be a dangerous tendency. He could not think lightly of a trifle or deal with it lightly; and he would appeal, I now think, to motives more exalted than the occasion justified. A little heedless utterance would be met by him not by a half-humorous word, but by a grave and solemn remonstrance. We feared his displeasure very much, but we could never be quite sure what would provoke it. If he was in a cheerful mood, he might pass over with a laugh or an ironical word what in a sad or anxious mood would evoke an indignant and weighty censure. I was much with him at this time, and was growing to understand him better; but even so, I could hardly say that I was at ease in his presence. I did not talk of the things that were in my mind, but of the things which I thought would please him; and when he was pleased, his delight was evident and richly rewarding.

But in these days he began to have a peculiar and touching affection for Hugh, and hoped that he would prove the beloved com-

panion of his age. Hugh used to trot about with him, spudding up weeds from the lawn. He used, when at home, to take Hugh's Latin lessons, and threw himself into the congenial task of teaching with all his force and interest. Yet I have often heard Hugh say that these lessons were seldom free from a sense of strain. He never knew what he might not be expected to know or to respond to with eager interest. My father had a habit, in teaching, of over-emphasizing minute details and nuances of words, insisting upon derivations and tenses, packing into language a mass of suggestions and associations which could never have entered into the mind of the writer. Language ought to be treated sympathetically, as the not over-precise expression of human emotion and wonder; but my father made it of a half-scientific, half-fanciful analysis. This might prove suggestive and enriching to more mature minds. But Hugh once said to me that he used to feel day after day like a small china mug being filled out of a waterfall. Moreover Hugh's mind was lively and imaginative, but fitful and impatient;

and the process both daunted and wearied him.

I have lately been looking through a number of letters from my father to Hugh in his schooldays. Reading between the lines, and knowing the passionate affection in the background, these are beautiful and pathetic documents. But they are over-full of advice, suggestion, criticism, anxious inquiries about work and religion, thought and character. This was all a part of the strain and tension at which my father lived. He was so absorbed in his work, found life such a tremendous business, was so deeply in earnest, that he could not relax, could not often enjoy a perfectly idle, leisurely, amused mood. Hugh himself was the exact opposite. He could work, in later days, with fierce concentration and immense energy ; but he also could enjoy, almost more than anyone I have ever seen, rambling, inconsequent, easy talk, consisting of stories, arguments, and ideas just as they came into his head ; this had no counterpart in my father, who was always purposeful.

But it was a happy time at Truro for Hugh.

Speaking generally, I should call him in those days a quick, inventive, active-minded child, entirely unsentimental; he was fond of trying his hand at various things, but he was impatient and volatile, would never take trouble, and as a consequence never did anything well. One would never have supposed, in those early days, that he was going to be so hard a worker, and still less such a worker as he afterwards became, who perfected his gifts by such continuous, prolonged, and constantly renewed labour. I recollect his giving a little conjuring entertainment as a boy, but he had practised none of his tricks, and the result was a fiasco, which had to be covered up by lavish and undeserved applause; a little later, too, at Addington, he gave an exhibition of marionettes, which illustrated historical scenes. The puppets were dressed by Beth, our old nurse, and my sisters, and Hugh was the showman behind the scenes. The little curtains were drawn up for a tableau which was supposed to represent an episode in the life of Thomas à Becket. Hugh's voice enunciated, "Scene, an a-arid waste!" Then came a silence, and then

Hugh was heard to say to his assistant in a loud, agitated whisper, "Where is the Archbishop?" But the puppet had been mislaid, and he had to go on to the next tableau. The most remarkable thing about him was a real independence of character, with an entire disregard of other people's opinion. What he liked, what he felt, what he decided, was the important thing to him, and so long as he could get his way, I do not think that he troubled his head about what other people might think or wish; he did not want to earn good opinions, nor did he care for disapproval or approval; people in fact were to him at that time just more or less favourable channels for him to follow his own designs, more or less stubborn obstacles to his attaining his wishes. He was not at all a sensitive or shrinking child. He was quite capable of holding his own, full of spirit and fearless, though quiet enough, and not in the least interfering, except when his rights were menaced.

IV

BOYHOOD

He went to school at Clevedon, in Somersetshire, in 1882, at Walton House, then presided over by Mr. Cornish. It was a well-managed place, and the teaching was good. I suppose that all boys of an independent mind dislike the first breaking-in to the ways of the world, and the exchanging of the freedom of home for the barrack-life of school, the absence of privacy, and the sense of being continually under the magnifying-glass which school gives. It was dreadful to Hugh to have to account for himself at all times, to justify his ways and tastes, his fancies and even his appearance, to boys and masters alike. Bullying is indeed practically extinct in well-managed schools; but small boys are inquisitive, observant, extremely conventional, almost like savages in their inventiveness of prohibitions and taboos, and perfectly

E. F. Benson
at Marlborough.
Aged 15.

A. C. Benson
at Cambridge.
Aged 21.

R. H. Benson
at Mr. Cornish's School
at Clevedon. Aged 11.

Photo by Elliott & Fry

THE THREE BROTHERS, 1882

merciless in criticism. The instinct for power is shown by small boys in the desire to make themselves felt, which is most easily accomplished by minute ridicule. Hugh made friends there, but he never really enjoyed the life of the place. The boys who get on well at school from the first are robust, normal boys, without any inconvenient originality, who enjoy games and the good-natured rough and tumble of school life. But Hugh was not a boy of that kind; he was small, not good at games, and had plenty of private fancies and ideas of his own. He was ill at ease, and he never liked the town of straggling modern houses on the low sea-front, with the hills and ports of Wales rising shadowy across the mud-stained tide.

He was quick and clever, and had been well taught; so that in 1885 he won a scholarship at Eton, and entered college there, to my great delight, in the September of that year. I had just returned to Eton as a master, and was living with Edward Lyttelton in a quaint, white-gabled house called Baldwin's Shore, which commanded a view of Windsor Castle, and

overlooked the little, brick-parapeted, shallow pond known as Barnes' Pool, which, with the sluggish stream that feeds it, separates the college from the town, and is crossed by the main London road. It was a quaint little house, which had long ago been a boarding-house, and contained many low-ceiled, odd-shaped rooms. Hugh was Edward Lyttelton's private pupil, so that he was often in and out of the place. But I did not see very much of him. He was a small, ingenuous-looking creature in those days, light-haired and blue-eyed; and when a little later he became a steerer of one of the boats, he looked very attractive in his Fourth of June dress, as a middy, with a dirk and white duck trousers, dangling an enormous bouquet from his neck. At Eton he did very little in the way of work, and his intellect must have been much in abeyance; because so poor was his performance, that it became a matter of surprise among his companions that he had ever won a scholarship at all.

I have said that I did not know very much about Hugh at Eton; this was the result of

Photo by Hills & Saunders

ROBERT HUGH BENSON

IN 1889. AGED 17

As Steerer of the *St. George*, at Eton

the fact that several of the boys of his set were my private pupils. It was absolutely necessary that a master in that position should avoid any possibility of collusion with a younger brother, whose friends were that master's pupils. If it had been supposed that I questioned Hugh about my pupils and their private lives, or if he had been thought likely to tell me tales, we should both of us have been branded. But as he had no wish to confide, and indeed little enough to consult anyone about, and as I had no wish for side-lights, we did not talk about his school life at all. The set of boys in which he lived was a curious one; they were fairly clever, but they must have been, I gathered afterwards, quite extraordinarily critical and quarrelsome. There was one boy in particular, a caustic, spiteful, and extremely mischief-making creature, who turned the set into a series of cliques and parties. Hugh used to say afterwards that he had never known anyone in his life with such an eye for other people's weaknesses, or with such a talent for putting them in the most disagreeable light. Hugh once nearly got into

serious trouble; a small boy in the set was remorselessly and disgracefully bullied; it came out, and Hugh was involved—I remember that Dr. Warre spoke to me about it with much concern — but a searching investigation revealed that Hugh had really had nothing to do with it, and the victim of the bullying spoke insistently in Hugh's favour.

Hugh describes how the facts became known in the holidays, and how my father, in his extreme indignation at what he supposed to be proved, so paralysed Hugh that he had no opportunity of clearing himself. But anyone who had ever known Hugh would have felt that it was the last thing he would have done. He was tenacious of his own rights, and argumentative enough; but he never had the faintest touch of the savagery that amuses itself at the sight of another's sufferings. "I hate cruelty more than anything in the whole world," he wrote later; "the existence of it is the only thing which reconciles my conscience to the necessity of Hell."

Hugh speaks in his book, *The Confession of a Convert*, about the extremely negative char-

acter of his religious impressions at school. I think it is wholly accurate. Living as we did in an ecclesiastical household, and with a father who took singular delight in ceremonial and liturgical devotion, I think that religion did impress itself rather too much as a matter of solemn and dignified occupation than as a matter of feeling and conduct. It was not that my father ever forgot the latter; indeed, behind his love for symbolical worship lay a passionate and almost Puritan evangelicalism. But he did not speak easily and openly of spiritual experience. I was myself profoundly attracted as a boy by the æsthetic side of religion, and loved its solemnities with all my heart; but it was not till I made friends with Bishop Wilkinson at the age of seventeen that I had any idea of spiritual religion and the practice of friendship with God. Certainly Hugh missed it, in spite of very loving and earnest talks and deeply touching letters from my father on the subject. I suppose that there must come for most people a spiritual awakening; and until that happens, all talk of emotional religion and the love of God is

a thing submissively accepted, and simply not understood or realised as an actual thing.

Hugh was not at Eton very long—not more than three or four years. He never became in any way a typical Etonian. If I am asked to say what that is, I should say that it is the imbibing instinctively of what is eminently a fine, manly, and graceful convention. Its good side is a certain chivalrous code of courage, honour, efficiency, courtesy, and duty. Its fault is a sense of perfect rightness and self-sufficiency, an overvaluing of sport and games, an undervaluing of intellectual interests, enthusiasm, ideas. It is not that the sense of effortless superiority is to be emphasized or insisted upon—modesty entirely forbids that—but it is the sort of feeling described ironically in the book of Job, when the patriarch says to the elders, "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you." It is a tacit belief that all has been done for one that the world can do, and that one's standing is so assured that it need never be even claimed or paraded.

Still less was Hugh a typical Colleger. College at Eton, where the seventy boys who

get scholarships are boarded, is a school within a school. The Collegers wear gowns and surplices in public, they have their own customs and traditions and games. It is a small, close, clever society, and produces a tough kind of self-confidence, together with a devotion to a particular tradition which is almost like a religious initiation. Perhaps if the typical Etonian is conscious of a certain absolute rightness in the eyes of the world, the typical Colleger has a sense almost of absolute righteousness, which does not need even to be endorsed by the world. The danger of both is that the process is completed at perhaps too early a date, and that the product is too consciously a finished one, needing to be enlarged and modified by contact with the world.

But Hugh did not stay at Eton long enough for this process to complete itself. He decided that he wished to compete for the Indian Civil Service; and as it was clear that he could not do this successfully at Eton, my father most reluctantly allowed him to leave.

I find among the little scraps which survive from his schoolboy days the following note. It was written on his last night at Eton. He says: "*I write this on Thursday evening after ten. Peel keeping passage.*" "Peel" is Sidney Peel, the Speaker's son. The passages are patrolled by the Sixth Form from ten to half-past, to see that no boy leaves his room without permission. Then follows:

My feelings on leaving are—

Excitement.
Foreboding of Wren's and fellows there.
Sorrow at leaving Eton.
Pride as being an old Etonian.
Certain pleasure in leaving for many trivial matters.
Feeling of importance.
Frightful longing for India.
Homesickness.

DEAR ME!

It was characteristic of Hugh that he should wish both to analyse his feelings on such an occasion, and to give expression to them.

V

AT WREN'S

Hugh accordingly went to Mr. Wren's coaching establishment in London, living partly at Lambeth, when my family were in town, and partly as a boarder with a clergyman. It was a time of hard work; and I really retain very few recollections of him at all at this date. I was myself very busy at Eton, and spent the holidays to a great extent in travelling and paying visits; and I think that Christmas, when we used to write, rehearse, and act a family play, was probably the only time at which I saw him.

Hugh went abroad for a short time to learn French, with a party of Indian Civil Service candidates, and no doubt forgot to write home, for I find the following characteristic letter of my father's to him:

Lambeth Palace, S.E., 30*th June* 1889.

My dearest Hughie,—We have been rather mourning about not hearing one word from

you. We *supposed* all would be right as you were a large party. But *one* word would be so easy to those who love you so, who have done all they could to enable you to follow your own line, against their own wishes and affection!

We hope at any rate you are writing to-day. And we have sent off "Pioneers and Founders," which we hope will both give you happy and interesting Sunday reading, and remind you of us.

Mr. Spiers writes that you are backward in French but getting on rather fast.

I want you now at the beginning of this cramming year to make two or three Resolutions, besides those which you know and have thought of often and practised:

1. To determine never to do any secular examination work on Sundays—to keep all reading that day as fitting "The *Lord's* Day" and the "Day of Rest."

I had a poor friend who would have done very well at Oxford, but he would make no difference between Sunday and other days. He worked on just the same—and in the

Examination *itself*, just as the goal was reached, he broke down and took no degree. The doctors said it was all owing to the continuous nervous strain. If he had taken the Sundays it would just have saved him.

Lord Selborne was once telling me of his tremendous work at one time, and he said, "I never could have done it, but that I took my Sundays. I never would work on them."

2. We have arranged for you to go over to the Holy Communion one day at Dinan. Perhaps some nice fellow will go with you—Mr. Spiers will anyhow. Tell us *which* Sunday, so that we may all be with you ἐν πνεύματι.

Last night we dined at the Speaker's to meet the Prince and Princess of Wales. It was very interesting. The Terrace of the House of Commons was lighted with electric light. A steamer went by and cheered!

The Shah will fill London with grand spectacles, and I suppose his coming will have much effect on politics—perhaps on *India* too.

All are well.—Ever your most loving father, EDW. CANTUAR.

I am going to preach at the Abbey to-night.

Hugh failed, however, to secure a place in the Indian Civil Service, and it was decided that he should go up to Trinity College, Cambridge, and read for classical honours.

Up to this date I do not think that anything very conscious or definite had been going on in Hugh's mind or heart. He always said himself that it astonished him on looking back to think how purely negative and undeveloped his early life had been, and how it had been lived on entirely superficial lines, without plans or ambitions, simply taking things as they came.

I think it was quite true that it was so; his emotions were dormant, his powers were dormant. I do not think he had either great affections or great friendships. He liked companionship and amusement, he avoided what bored him; he had no inclinations to evil, but neither had he any marked inclina-

tions to what was good. Neither had any of his many and varied gifts and accomplishments showed themselves. I used to think latterly that he was one of the most gifted people I had ever seen in all artistic ways. Whatever he took up he seemed able to do, without any apprenticeship or drudgery. Music, painting, drawing, carving, designing—he took them all up in turn; and I used to feel that if he had devoted himself to any one of them he could have reached a high excellence. Even his literary gifts, so various and admirable, showed but few signs of their presence in the early days; he was not in the least precocious. I think that on the whole it was beneficial to him that his energies all lay fallow. My father, stern as his conception of duty was, had a horror of applying any intellectual pressure to us. I myself must confess that I was distinctly idle and dilettante both as a boy at Eton and as a Cambridge undergraduate. But much as my father appreciated and applauded any little successes, I was often surprised that I was never taken to task for my poor performances in work and scholar-

ship. The truth was that my eldest brother's death at Winchester was supposed partly to have been due to his extraordinary intellectual and mental development, and I am sure that my father was afraid of over-stimulating our mental energies. I feel certain that what was going on in Hugh's case all the time was a keen exercise of observation. I have no doubt that his brain was receiving and gaining impressions of every kind, and that his mind was not really inactive—it was only unconsciously amassing material. He had a very quick and delighted perception of human temperament, of the looks, gestures, words, mannerisms, habits, and oddities of human beings. If Hugh had been born in a household professionally artistic, and had been trained in art of any kind, I think he would very likely have become an accomplished artist or musician, and probably have shown great precocity. But he was never an artist in the sense that art was a torment to him, or that he made any sacrifice of other aims to it. It was always just a part of existence to him, and of the nature of an amusement,

though in so far as it represented the need of self-expression in forms of beauty, it underlay and permeated the whole of his life.

The first sign of his artistic enthusiasm awakening was during his time in London, when he conceived an intense admiration for the music and ceremony of St. Paul's. Sir George Martin, on whom my father had conferred a musical degree, was very kind to him, and allowed Hugh to frequent the organ-loft. "To me," Hugh once wrote, "music is the great reservoir of emotion from which flow out streams of salvation." But this was not only a musical devotion. I believe that he now conceived, or rather perhaps developed, a sense of the symbolical poetry of religious rites and ceremonies which remained with him to the end. It is true to say that the force and quality of ritual, as a province of art, has been greatly neglected and overlooked. It is not for a moment to be regarded as a purely artistic thing; but it most undoubtedly has an attraction and a fascination as clear and as sharply defined as the attraction of music, poetry, painting or

drama. All art is an attempt to express a sense of the overwhelming power of beauty. It is hard to say what beauty is, but it seems to be one of the inherent qualities of the Unknown, an essential part of the Divine mind. In England we are so stupid and so concrete that we are apt to think of a musician as one who arranges chords, and of a painter as one who copies natural effects. It is not really that at all. The artist is in reality struggling with an idea, which idea is a consciousness of an amazing and adorable quality in things, which affects him passionately and to which he must give expression. The form which his expression takes is conditioned by the sharpness of his perception in some direction or other. To the musician, notes and intervals and vibrations are just the fairy flights and dances of forms audible to the ear ; to the painter, it is a question of shapes and colours perceptible to the eye. The dramatist sees the same beauty in the interplay of human emotion ; while it may be maintained that holiness itself is a passionate perception of moral beauty, and that the saint is attracted

by purity and compassion, and repelled by sin, disorder, and selfishness, in the same way as the artist is attracted and repelled by visible charm and ugliness.

Ritual has been as a rule so closely annexed to religion—though all spectacular delights and ceremonies have the same quality—that it has never been reckoned among artistic predilections. The aim of ritual is, I believe, a high poetry of which the essence is symbolism and mystery. The movement of forms solemnly vested, and with a background of architecture and music, produces an emotion quite distinct from other artistic emotions. It is a method, like all other arts, through which a human being arrives at a sense of mysterious beauty, and it evokes in mystical minds a passion to express themselves in just that way and no other, and to celebrate thus their sense of the unknown.

But there has always been a natural terror in the religious mind of laying too much stress on this, or of seeming to encourage too much an æsthetic emotion. If the first business of religion is to purify life, there will always

be a suspicion of idolatry about ritual, a fear of substituting a vague desire for beauty for a practical devotion to right conduct.

Hugh wrote to me some years later what he felt about it all:

". . . Liturgy, to my mind, is nothing more than a very fine and splendid art, conveying things, to people who possess the liturgical faculty, in an extraordinarily dramatic and vivid way. I further believe that this is an art which has been gradually brought nearer and nearer perfection by being tested and developed through nineteen centuries, by every kind of mind and nationality. The way in which it does, indisputably, appeal to such very different kinds of people, and unite them, does, quite apart from other things, give it a place with music and painting.

. . . . . .

"I do frankly acknowledge Liturgy to be no more than an art—and therefore not in the least generally necessary to salvation; and I do not in the least 'condemn' people who do not appreciate it. It is only a way of present-

ing facts—and, in the case of Holy Week Ceremonies, these facts are such as those of the Passion of Christ, the sins of men, the Resurrection and the Sovereignty of Christ."

. . . . . .

I have laid stress upon all this, because I believe that from this time the poetry and beauty of ritual had a deep and increasing fascination for Hugh. But it is a thing about which it is so easy for the enemy to blaspheme, to ridicule ceremonial in religion as a mere species of entertainment, that religious minds have always been inclined to disclaim the strength of its influence. Hugh certainly inherited this particular perception from my father. I should doubt if anyone ever knew so much about religious ceremonial as he did, or perceived so clearly the force of it. "I am almost ashamed to seem to know so much about these things," I have often heard him say; and again, "I don't ever seem able to forget the smallest detail of ritual." My father had a very strong artistic nature —poetry, sculpture, painting, architecture, scenery, were all full of fascination to him—

for music alone of the arts he had but little taste; and I think that it ought to be realised that Hugh's nature was an artistic one through and through. He had the most lively and passionate sensibility to the appeal of art. He had, too, behind the outer sensitiveness, the inner toughness of the artist. It is often mistakenly thought that the artist is sensitive through and through. In my experience, this is not the case. The artist has to be protected against the overwhelming onset of emotions and perceptions by a strong interior fortress of emotional calm and serenity. It is certain that this was the case with Hugh. He was not in the least sentimental, he was not really very emotional. He was essentially solitary within; he attracted friendship and love more than he gave them. I do not think that he ever suffered very acutely through his personal emotions. His energy of output was so tremendous, his power of concentration so great, that he found a security here from the more ravaging emotions of the heart. Not often did he give his heart away; he admired greatly, he sympathised

freely; but I never saw him desolated or stricken by any bereavement or loss. I used to think sometimes that he never needed anyone. I never saw him exhibit the smallest trace of jealousy, nor did he ever desire to possess anyone's entire affection. He recognised any sign of affection generously and eagerly; but he never claimed to keep it exclusively as his own.

VI

CAMBRIDGE

Hugh went then to Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1890. He often talked to me in later days about his time there as an undergraduate. He found a number of his Eton contemporaries up there, and he had a very sociable time. A friend and contemporary of his at Trinity describes him as small, light, and boyish-looking. "He walked fast, and always appeared to be busy." He never cared much about athletics, but he was an excellent steerer. He steered the third Trinity boat all the time he was at Cambridge, and was a member of the Leander club. He was always perfectly cool, and not in the smallest degree nervous. He was, moreover, an excellent walker and mountain-climber. He once walked up to London from Cambridge; I have climbed mountains with him, and he was very agile, quick, surefooted, and entirely intrepid. Let

me interpolate a little anecdote of an accident at Pontresina, which might have been serious. Hugh and I, with a practised Alpine climber, Dr. Leith, left Pontresina early one morning to climb a rock-peak. We were in a light carriage with a guide and a porter. The young horse which drew us, as we were rattling down the high embanked road leading to Samaden, took a sharp turn to the right, where a road branched off. He was sharply checked by the guide, with the result that the carriage collided with a stone post, and we were all flung out down the embankment, a living cataract of men, ice-axes, haversacks, and wraps. The horse fortunately stopped. We picked ourselves ruefully up and resumed our places. Not until we reached our destination did we become aware that the whole incident had passed in silence. Not one word of advice or recrimination or even of surprise had passed anyone's lips!

But Hugh's climbing was put a stop to by a sharp attack of heart-failure on the Piz Palù. He was with my brother Fred, and after a long climb through heavy snow, he collapsed and

was with difficulty carried down. He believed himself to be on the point of death, and records in one of his books that the prospect aroused no emotion whatever in his mind either of fear or excitement, only of deep curiosity.

While he was an undergraduate, he and I had a sudden and overwhelming interest in family history and genealogy. We went up to Yorkshire for a few days one winter, stayed at Pateley Bridge, Ripon, Bolton Abbey, Ripley, and finally York. At Pateley Bridge we found the parish registers very ancient and complete, and by the aid of them, together with the printed register of Fountains Abbey, we traced a family tree back as far as to the fourteenth century, with ever-increasing evidence of the poverty and mean condition of our ancestral stock. We visited the houses and cradles of the race, and from comfortable granges and farmsteads we declined, as the record conducted us back, to hovels and huts of quite conspicuous humility and squalor. The thermometer fell lower and lower every day in sympathy with our researches. I remember a night when we slept in a neglected assembly-room tacked on

to a country inn, on hastily improvised and scantily covered beds, when the water froze in the ewers; and an attempt to walk over the moors one afternoon from Masham into Nidderdale, when the springs by the roadside froze into lumpy congealments, like guttering candles, and we were obliged to turn back; and how we beguiled a ten-mile walk to Ripon, the last train having gone, by telling an enormous improvised story, each taking an alternate chapter, and each leaving the knots to be untied by the next narrator. Hugh was very lively and ingenious in this, and proved the most delightful of companions, though we had to admit as we returned together that we had ruined the romance of our family history beyond repair.

Hugh did very little work at Cambridge; he had given up classics, and was working at theology, with a view to taking Orders. He managed to secure a Third in the Tripos; he showed no intellectual promise whatever; he was a very lively and amusing companion and a keen debater; I think he wrote a little poetry; but he had no very pronounced tastes. I

remember his pointing out to me the windows of an extremely unattractive set of ground-floor rooms in Whewell's Court as those which he had occupied till he migrated to the Bishop's Hostel, eventually moving to the Great Court. They look down Jesus Lane, and the long, sombre wall of Sidney Sussex Garden. A flagged passage runs down to the right of them, and the sitting-room is on the street. They were dark, stuffy, and extremely noisy. The windows were high up, and splashed with mud by the vehicles in the street, while it was necessary to keep them shut, because otherwise conversation was wholly inaudible. "What did you do there?" I said. "Heaven knows!" he answered. "As far as I can remember, I mostly sat up late at night and played cards!" He certainly spent a great deal of money. He had a good allowance, but he had so much exceeded it at the end of his first year, that a financial crisis followed, and my mother paid his debts for him. He had kept no accounts, and he had entertained profusely.

The following letter from my father to him

Photo by Elliott & Fry

ROBERT HUGH BENSON

IN 1893. AGED 21

As an undergraduate at Cambridge

refers to one of Hugh's attempts to economise. He caught a bad feverish cold at Cambridge as a result of sleeping in a damp room, and was carried off to be nursed by my uncle, Henry Sidgwick:

ADDINGTON PARK, CROYDON,
26th Jan. 1891.

DEAREST HUGHIE,—I was rather disturbed to hear that you imagined that what I said in October about not *needlessly indulging* was held by you to forbid your having a fire in your bedroom on the ground floor in the depth of such a winter as we have had!

You ought to have a fire lighted at such a season at 8 o'clock so as to warm and dry the room, and all in it, nearly every evening—and whenever the room seems damp, have a fire just lighted to go out when it will. It's not wholesome to sleep in heated rooms, but they must be dry. A *bed* slept in every night keeps so, if the room is not damp; but the room must not be damp, and when it is unoccupied for two or three days it is sure to get so.

Be sure that there is a good fire in it all day,

and all your bed things, *mattress and all*, kept well before it for at *least* a *whole day before you go back from Uncle Henry's.*

How was it your bed-maker had not your room well warmed and dried, mattress dry, etc., before you went up this time? She ought to have had, and should be spoken to about it—*i.e.* unless you told her not to! in which case it would be very like having no breakfast!

It has been a horrid interruption in the beginning of term—and you'll have difficulty with the loss of time. Besides which I have no doubt you have been very uncomfortable.

But I don't understand why you should have "nothing to write about" because you have been in bed. Surely you must have accumulated all sorts of reflective and imaginative stories there.

It is most kind of Aunt Nora and Uncle Henry—give my love and thanks to both.

I grieve to say that many many more fish are found dead since the thaw melted the banks of swept snow off the sides of the ice. It is most piteous; the poor things seem to have come to the edge where the water is shallowest

—there is a shoal where we generally feed the swans.

I am happy to say the goldfish seem all alive and merry. The continual dropping of fresh water has no doubt saved them—they were never hermetically sealed in like the other poor things.

Yesterday I was at Ringwould, near Dover. The farmers had been up all night saving their cattle in the stalls from the sudden floods.

Here we have not had any, though the earth is washed very much from the hills in streaks.

We are—at least I am—dreadfully sorry to go to London—though the house is very dull without "the boys."

All right about the books.—Ever your loving father, EDW. CANTUAR.

Hugh was much taken up with experiments in hypnotism as an undergraduate, and found that he had a real power of inducing hypnotic sleep, and even of curing small ailments. He told my mother all about his experiments, and she wrote to him at once that he must either leave this off while he was at Cambridge, or

that my father must be told. Hugh at once gave up his experiments, and escaped an unpleasant contretemps, as the authorities discovered what was going on, and actually, I believe, sent some of the offenders down.

Hugh says that he drifted into the idea of taking Orders as the line of least resistance, though when he began the study of theology he said that he had found the one subject he really cared for. But he had derived a very strong half-religious, half-artistic impression from reading *John Inglesant* just before he came up to Cambridge. He could long after repeat many passages by heart, and he says that a half-mystical, half-emotional devotion to the Person of Our Lord, which he derived from the book, seemed to him to focus and concentrate all his vague religious emotions. He attended the services at King's Chapel regularly, but he says that he had no real religious life, and only looked forward to being a country clergyman with a beautiful garden, an exquisite choir, and a sober bachelor existence.

It was on an evening walk at Addington

Photo by H. Walter Barnett, 12 Knightsbridge, S.W.

MRS. BENSON

MAY 1910

with my mother that he told her of his intention to take Orders. They had gone together to evensong at a neighbouring church, Shirley, and as they came back in the dusk through the silent woods of the park, he said he believed he had received the call, and had answered, "Here am I, send me!" My mother had the words engraved on the inside of a ring, which Hugh wore for many years.

By far the closest and dearest of all the ties which bound Hugh to another was his love for my mother. Though she still lives to bless us, I may say this, that never did a mother give to her children a larger and a wiser love than she gave to us; she was our playmate and companion, but we always gave her a perfectly trustful and unquestioning obedience. Yet it was always a reasonable and critical obedience. She never exacted silent submission, but gave us her reasons readily. She never curtailed our independence, or oppressed us with a sense of over-anxiety. She never demanded confidence, but welcomed it with perfect understanding.

The result of this with Hugh was that he came to consult her about everything, about

his plans, his schemes, his books, his beliefs. He read all his writings aloud to her, and deferred much to her frankly critical mind and her deeply human insight. At the time when he was tending towards Rome, she accompanied him every step of the way, though never disguising from him her own differences of opinion and belief. It was due to her that he suspended his decision, read books, consulted friends, gave the old tradition full weight; he never had the misery of feeling that she was overcome by a helpless distress, because she never attempted to influence any one of us away from any course we thought it right to pursue. She did not conceal her opinion, but wished Hugh to make up his own mind, believing that everyone must do that, and that the only chance of happiness lies there.

There was no one in the world whom he so regarded and admired and loved; but yet it was not merely a tender and deferential sentiment. He laid his mind open before her, and it was safe to do that, because my mother never had any wish to prevail by sentiment or by claiming loyalty. He knew that she would be

perfectly candid too, with love waiting behind all conflict of opinion. And thus their relation was the most perfect that could be imagined, because he knew that he could speak and act with entire freedom, while he recognised the breadth and strength of her mind, and the insight of her love. No one can really understand Hugh's life without a knowledge of what my mother was to him—an equal friend, a trusted adviser, a candid critic, and a tender mother as well. And even when he went his own way, as he did about health and work, though she foresaw only too clearly what the end might be, and indeed what it actually was, she always recognised that he had a right to live as he chose and to work as he desired. She was not in the least blind to his lesser faults of temperament, nor did she ever construct an artificial image of him. My family has, I have no doubt, an unusual freedom of mutual criticism. I do not think we have ever felt it to be disloyal to see each other in a clear light. But I am inclined to believe that the affection which subsists without the necessity of cherishing illusions, has a solidity about it

which more purely sentimental loyalties do not always possess. And I have known few relations so perfect as those between Hugh and my mother, because they were absolutely tender and chivalrous, and at the same time wholly candid, natural, and open-eyed.

It was at this time that my eldest sister died quite suddenly of diphtheria. I have told something of her life elsewhere. She had considerable artistic gifts, in music, painting, and writing. She had written a novel, and left unpublished a beautiful little book of her own experiences among the poor, called *Streets and Lanes of the City*. It was privately printed, and is full of charming humour and delicate observation, together with a real insight into vital needs. I always believe that my sister would have done a great work if she had lived. She had strong practical powers and a very large heart. She had been drawn more and more into social work at Lambeth, and I think would have eventually given herself up to such work. She had a wonderful power of establishing a special personal relation with those whom she loved, and I remember realising after her

death that each of her family felt that they were in a peculiar and individual relation to her of intimacy and confidence. She had sent Hugh from her deathbed a special message of love and hope; and this had affected him very much.

We were not allowed to go back at once to our work, Fred, Hugh, and myself, because of the possibility of infection; and we went off to Seaford together for a few days, where we read, walked, wrote letters, and talked. It was a strange time; but Hugh, I recollect, got suddenly weary of it, and with the same decision which always characterised him, said that he must go to London in order to be near St. Paul's. He went off at once, and stayed with Arthur Mason. I was struck with this at the time; he did not think it necessary to offer any explanations or reasons. He simply said he could not stand it, quite frankly and ingenuously, and promptly disappeared.

VII

LLANDAFF

In 1892 Hugh went to read for Orders with Dean Vaughan, who held the Deanery of Llandaff together with the Mastership of the Temple. The Dean had been a successful Headmaster of Harrow, and for a time Vicar of Doncaster. He was an Evangelical by training and temperament. My father had a high admiration for him as a great headmaster, a profound and accomplished scholar, and most of all as a man of deep and fervent piety. I remember Vaughan's visits to Lambeth. He had the air, I used to think, rather of an old-fashioned and highly-bred country clergyman than of a headmaster and a Church dignitary. With his rather long hair, brushed back, his large, pale face, with its meek and smiling air, and his thin, clear, and deliberate voice, he gave the impression of a much-disciplined, self-restrained, and chastened man. He

had none of the brisk effectiveness or mundane radiance of a successful man of affairs. But this was a superficial view, because, if he became moved or interested, he revealed a critical incisiveness of speech and judgment, as well as a profound and delicate humour.

He had collected about himself an informal band of young men who read theology under his direction. He used to give a daily lecture, but there was no college or regular discipline. The men lived in lodgings, attended the cathedral service, arranged their own amusements and occupations. But Vaughan had a stimulating and magnetic effect over his pupils, many of whom have risen to high eminence in the Church.

They were constantly invited to meals at the deanery, where Mrs. Vaughan, a sister of Dean Stanley, and as brilliant, vivacious, and witty a talker as her brother, kept the circle entranced and delighted by her suggestive and humorous talk. My brother tells the story of how, in one of the Dean's long and serious illnesses, from which he eventually recovered, Mrs. Vaughan absented

herself one day on a mysterious errand, and the Dean subsequently discovered, with intense amusement and pleasure, that she had gone to inspect a house in which she intended to spend her widowhood. The Dean told the whole story in her presence to some of the young men who were dining there, and sympathised with her on the suspension of her plans. I remember, too, that my brother described to me how, in the course of the same illness, Mrs. Vaughan, who was greatly interested in some question of the Higher Criticism, had gone to the Dean's room to read to him, and had suggested that they should consider and discuss some disputed passage of the Old Testament. The Dean gently but firmly declined. Mrs. Vaughan coming downstairs, Bible in hand, found a caller in the drawing-room who inquired after the Dean. "I have just come from him," said Mrs. Vaughan, "and it is naturally a melancholy thought, but he seems to have entirely lost his faith. He would not let me read the Bible with him; he practically said that he had no further interest in the Bible!"

Hugh was very happy at Llandaff. He says that he began to read *John Inglesant* again, and explored the surrounding country to see if he could find a suitable place to set up a small community house, on the lines of Nicholas Ferrar's Little Gidding. This idea was thenceforth much in his mind. At this time his day-dream was that it should be not an ascetic order, but rather devotional and mystical. It was, I expect, mainly an æsthetic idea at present. The setting, the ceremonial, the solemn order of the whole was prominent, with the contemplation of spiritual beauty as the central principle. The various strains which went to suggest such a scheme are easy to unravel. Hugh says frankly that marriage and domesticity always appeared to him inconceivable, but at the same time he was sociable, and had the strong creative desire to form and express a definite conception of life. He had always the artistic impulse to translate an idea into visible and tangible shape. He had, I think, little real pastoral impulse at this, if indeed at any, time, and his view was individualistic. The community, in his

mind, was to exist not, I believe, for discipline or extension of thought, or even for solidarity of action; it was rather to be a fortress of quiet for the encouragement of similar individual impulses. He used to talk a good deal about his plans for the community in these days—and it is interesting to compare with this the fact that I had already written a book, never published, about a literary community on the same sort of lines, while to go a little further back, it may be remembered that at one time my father and Westcott used to entertain themselves with schemes for what they called a *Cœnobium*, which was to be an institution in which married priests with their families were to lead a common life with common devotions.

But I used to be reminded, in hearing Hugh detail his plans, of the case of a friend of ours, whom I will call Lestrange, who had at one time entered a Benedictine monastery as a novice. Lestrange used to talk about himself in an engaging way in the third person, and I remember him saying that the reason why he left the monastery was "because Lestrange

found that he could only be an inmate of a monastery in which Lestrange was also Abbot!" I did not feel that in Hugh's community there would be much chance of the independent expression of the individualities of his associates!

He was ordained deacon in 1894 at Addington, or rather in Croydon parish church, by my father, whose joy in admitting his beloved son to the Anglican ministry was very great indeed.

Before the ordination Hugh decided to go into solitary retreat. He took two rooms in the lodge-cottage of Burton Park, two or three miles out of Lincoln. I suppose he selected Lincoln as a scene endeared to him by childish memories.

He divided the day up for prayer, meditation, and solitary walks, and often went in to service in the cathedral. He says that he was in a state of tense excitement, and the solitude and introspection had an alarmingly depressing effect upon him. He says that the result of this was an appalling mental agony: "It seemed to me after a day or two that

there was no truth in religion, that Jesus Christ was not God, that the whole of life was an empty sham, and that I was, if not the chiefest of sinners, at any rate the most monumental of fools." He went to the Advent services feeling, he says, like a soul in hell. But matters mended after that, and the ordination itself seemed to him a true consecration. He read the Gospel, and he remembered gratefully the sermon of Canon Mason, my father's beloved friend and chaplain.

VIII

THE ETON MISSION

THERE were many reasons why Hugh should begin his clerical work at Hackney Wick, though I suspect it was mainly my father's choice. It was a large, uniformly poor district, which had been adopted by Eton in about 1880 as the scene of its Mission. There were certain disadvantages attending the choice of that particular district. The real *raison d'être* of a School Mission is educative rather than philanthropic, in order to bring boys into touch with social problems, and to give them some idea that the way of the world is not the way of a prosperous and sheltered home. It is open to doubt whether it is possible to touch boys' hearts and sympathies much except by linking a School Mission on to some institution for the care of boys—an orphan school or a training ship. Only the most sensitive are shocked and distressed by the sight of hard

conditions of life at all, and as a rule boys have an extraordinarily unimaginative way of taking things as they see them, and not thinking much or anxiously about mending them.

In any case the one aim ought to be to give boys a personal interest in such problems, and put them in personal touch with them. But the Eton Mission was planted in a district which it was very hard to reach from Eton, so that few of the boys were ever able to make a personal acquaintance with the hard and bare conditions of life in the crowded industrial region which their Mission was doing so much to help and uplift, or to realise the urgency of the needs of a district which most of them had never visited.

But if the Mission did not touch the imagination of the boys, yet, on the other hand, it became a very well-managed parish, with ample resources to draw upon; and it certainly attracted the services of a number of old Etonians, who had reached a stage of thought at which the problem of industrial poverty became an interesting one.

Money was poured out upon the parish; a

magnificent church was built, a clergy-house was established, curates were subsidised, clubs were established, and excellent work was done there. The vicar at this time was a friend and contemporary of my own at Eton, St. Clair Donaldson, now Archbishop of Brisbane. He had lived with us as my father's chaplain for a time, but his mind was set on parish work rather than administration. He knew Hugh well, and Hugh was an Etonian himself. Moreover, my father was glad that Hugh should be with a trusted friend, and so he went there. St. Clair Donaldson was a clergyman of an Evangelical type, though the Mission had been previously conducted by a very High Churchman, William Carter, the present Archbishop of Capetown. But now distinctive High Church practices were given up, and the parish was run on moderate, kindly, and sensible lines. Whether such an institution is primarily and distinctively religious may be questioned. Such work is centred rather upon friendly and helpful relations, and religion becomes one of a number of active forces, rather than the force upon which all

depends. High-minded, duty-loving, transparently good and cheerful as the tone of the clergy was, it was, no doubt, tentative rather than authoritative.

Hugh's work there lay a good deal in the direction of the boys' clubs; he used to go down to the clubs, play and talk with the boys, and go out with them on Saturday afternoons to football and cricket. But he never found it a congenial occupation, and I cannot help feeling that it was rather a case of putting a very delicate and subtle instrument to do a rough sort of work. What was needed was a hearty, kindly, elder-brotherly relation, and the men who did this best were the good-natured and robust men with a generic interest in the young, who could set a clean-minded, wholesome, and hearty example. But Hugh was not of this type. His mind was full of mystical and poetical ideas of religion, and his artistic nature was intent upon expressing them. He was successful in a way, because he had by this time a great charm of frankness and simplicity; he never had the least temptation to draw social distinctions, but he desired to find

people personally interesting. He used to say afterwards that he did not really believe in what involved a sort of social condescension, and, like another incisive missioner, he thought that the giving up a few evenings a week by wealthy and even fashionable young men, however good-hearted and earnest, to sharing the amusements of the boys of a parish, was only a very uncomfortable way of showing the poor how the rich lived! There is no sort of doubt about the usefulness and kindliness of such work, and it obviously is one of the experiments which may tend to create social sympathy: but Hugh came increasingly to believe that the way to lead boys to religion was not through social gatherings, but by creating a strong central nucleus of Christian instruction and worship; his heart was certainly not in his work at this time, though there was much that appealed to him, particularly to his sense of humour, which was always strongly developed.

There was an account he gave of a funeral he had to conduct in the early days of his work, where, after a large congregation had

assembled in the church, the arrival of the coffin itself was delayed, and he was asked to keep things going. He gave out hymns, he read collects, he made a short address, and still the undertaker at the door shook his head. At last he gave out a hymn that was not very well known, and found that the organist had left his post, whereupon he sang it alone, as an unsustained solo.

He told me, too, that after preaching written sermons, he resolved to try an extempore one. He did so with much nervousness and hesitation. The same evening St. Clair Donaldson said to him kindly but firmly that preachers were of two kinds—the kind that could write a fairly coherent discourse and deliver it more or less impressively, and the kind that might venture, after careful preparation, to speak extempore; and that he felt bound to tell Hugh that he belonged undoubtedly to the first kind. This was curious, because Hugh afterwards became, by dint of trouble and practice, a quite remarkably distinguished and impressive preacher. Indeed, even before he left the Church of England, the late Lord Stanmore,

who was an old friend of my father's, said to me that he had heard all the great Anglican preachers for many years, and that he had no hesitation in putting my brother in the very first rank.

However his time was very full; the parish was magnificently organised; besides the clubs there were meetings of all sorts, very systematic visiting, a ladies' settlement, plays acted by children, in which Hugh took a prominent part both in composing the libretto and rehearsing the performances, coaching as many as seventy children at a time.

He went to a retreat given by a Cowley Father in the course of his time at the Eton Mission, and heard Father Maturin unfold, with profound enthusiasm and inspiring eloquence, a scheme of Catholic doctrine, worship, and practice, laying especial stress on Confession. These ideas began to take shape in Hugh's mind, and he came to the conclusion that it was necessary in a place like London, and working among the harassed and ill-educated poor, to *materialise* religion—that is to say, to fit some definite form, rite, symbol,

and practice to religious emotion. He thought that the bright, dignified, and stately adjuncts of worship, such as they had at the Eton Mission, were not adequate to awaken the sense of the personal and intimate relation between man and God.

In this belief he was very possibly right. Of course the dangers of the theory are obvious. There is the ultimate danger of what can fairly be called superstition, that is to say, giving to religion a magical kind of influence over the material side of life. Rites, relics, images tend to become, in irrational minds, invested with an inherent and mechanical sanctity, instead of being the symbols of grace. But it is necessary to risk something; and though the risk of what may be called a sort of idolatry is great, the risk of not arousing the sense of personal religion at all is greater still.

Hugh's ordination as a priest followed in 1895; and he then made a full confession before a clergyman.

In 1896, in October, my father, who had paid a state visit to Ireland, on his return

went to stay with Mr. Gladstone at Hawarden, and died there in church on a Sunday morning.

I can never forget the events of that terrible day. I received a telegram at Eton which summoned me to Hawarden, but did not state explicitly that my father was dead. I met Hugh at Euston, who told me the fact, and I can recollect walking up and down the half-deserted station with him, in a state of deep and bewildered grief. The days which followed were so crowded with business and arrangements, that even the sight of my father's body, lying robed and still, and palely smiling, in the great library of the rectory failed to bring home to me the sense that his fiery, eager, strenuous life was over. I remember that Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone came to the church with us, and that Hugh celebrated and gave us the Communion. But the day when we travelled south with the coffin, the great pomp at Canterbury, which was attended by our present King and the present King of Norway, when we laid him to rest in a vault under the north-western tower, and the days

of hurried and crowded business at Addington are still faint and dream-like to me.

My mother and sister went out to Egypt for the winter; Hugh's health broke down; he was threatened with rheumatic fever, and was ordered to go out with them. It was here that he formed a very close and intimate companionship with my sister Maggie, and came to rely much on her tender sympathy and wise advice. He never returned to the Eton Mission.

IX

KEMSING AND MIRFIELD

The change proved very beneficial to Hugh; but it was then, with returning health and leisure for reflection, that he began to consider the whole question of Anglicanism and Catholicism. He describes some of the little experiences which turned his mind in this direction. He became aware of the isolation and what he calls the "provincialism" of the Anglican Church. He saw many kinds of churches and varieties of worship. He went on through the Holy Land, and at Jerusalem celebrated the Communion in the Chapel of Abraham; at Damascus he heard with a sort of horror of the submission of Father Maturin to Rome. In all this his scheme of a religious community revived. The ceremonial was to be Caroline. "We were to wear no eucharistic vestments, but full surplices and black scarves, and were to do nothing in particular."

When he returned, he went as curate to Kemsing, a village in Kent. It was decided that for the sake of his health his work must be light. The Rector, Mr. Skarratt, was a wealthy man; he had restored the church beautifully, and had organised a very dignified and careful musical service. Hugh lived with him at the vicarage, a big, comfortable house, with a succession of interesting guests. He had a very happy year, devoting much attention to preaching, and doing a great deal of work among the children, for which he had a quite singular gift. He had a simple and direct way with them, equally removed from both petting and authoritativeness. His own natural childlikeness came out—and indeed all his life long he preserved the innocence, the impulsiveness, the mingled impatience and docility of a child more than any man I ever saw.

I remember a conversation I had with Hugh about this time. An offer had been made to him, through me, of an important country living. He said that he was extraordinarily happy at Kemsing, but that he was too comfortable—he needed more discipline.

He said further that he was beginning to find that he had the power of preaching, and that it was in this direction rather than in the direction of pastoral activity that his life was going to lie.

It was rather a pettish conversation. I asked him whether he might not perhaps find the discipline he needed in doing the pastoral work which did not interest him, rather than in developing his life on lines which he preferred. I confess that it was rather a priggish line to take; and in any case it did not come well from me because as a schoolmaster I think I always pursued an individualistic line, and worked hard on my own private basis of preferences rather than on the established system of the school. But I did not understand Hugh at this date. It is always a strain to find one whom one has always regarded as a boy, almost as a child, holding strong and definitely matured views. I thought him self-absorbed and wilful—as indeed he was—but he was pursuing a true instinct and finding his real life.

He then received an invitation to become

a mission preacher, and went to consult Archbishop Temple about it. The Archbishop told him, bluffly and decisively, that he was far too young, and that before he took it upon himself to preach to men and women he ought to have more experience of their ways and hearts.

But Hugh with his usual independence was not in the least daunted. He had an interview with Dr. Gore, now Bishop of Oxford, who was then Head of the House of the Resurrection at Mirfield, and was accepted by him as a probationer in the Community. Hugh went to ask leave of Archbishop Maclagan, and having failed with one Primate succeeded with another.

The Community of the Resurrection was established by Bishop Gore as an Anglican house more or less on Benedictine lines. It acquired a big house among gardens, built, I believe, by a wealthy manufacturer. It has since been altered and enlarged, but Hugh drew an amusing set of sketches to illustrate the life there, in which it appears a rueful and rather tawdry building, of yellow stone and

blue slate, of a shallow and falsetto Gothic, or with what may be called Gothic sympathies. It is at Mirfield, near Bradford, in the Calder valley ; the country round full of high chimneys, and the sky much blurred with smoke, but the grounds and gardens were large, and suited to a spacious sort of retirement. From the same pictures I gather that the house was very bare within and decidedly unpleasing, with no atmosphere except that of a denuded Victorian domesticity.

Some of the Brothers were occupied in definitely erudite work, editing liturgical, expository, and devotional works ; and for these there was a large and learned library. The rest were engaged in evangelistic mission work with long spaces of study and devotion, six months roughly being assigned to outside activities, and six to Community life. The day began early, the Hours were duly recited. There was work in the morning and after tea, with exercise in the afternoon. On Saturday a chapter was held, with public confession, made kneeling, of external breaches of the rule. Silence was kept from Compline, at ten o'clock, until the

next day's midday meal; there was manual work, wood-chopping, coal-breaking, boot-cleaning and room-dusting. For a long time Hugh worked at step-cutting in the quarry near the house, which was being made into a garden. The members wore cassocks with a leather belt. They were called "Father," and the head of the house was "Senior" or "Superior."

The vows were simple, of poverty, chastity, and obedience, but were renewed annually for a period of thirteen months, accompanied by an expression of an intention, only, to remain in the community for life. As far as I remember, if a Brother had private means, he was bound to hand over his income but not his capital, while he was a member, and the copyright of all books written during membership belonged absolutely to the Community. Hugh wrote the book of mystical stories, *The Light Invisible*, at this time; it had a continuous sale, and he used humorously to lament the necessity of handing over the profits to the Order, long after he had left it and joined the Church of Rome. The Brothers were not allowed, I

think, to possess any personal property, and received clothing and small luxuries either as gifts, or purchased them through orders from the Bursar. Our dear old family nurse, Beth, to whom Hugh was as the apple of her eye, used to make him little presents of things that he needed—his wardrobe was always scanty and threadbare — and would at intervals lament his state of destitution. "I can't bear to think of the greedy creatures taking away all the gentlemen's things!"

There was a chapel in the house, of a High Anglican kind, where vestments and incense were used, and plainsong sung. There were about fourteen Brothers.

Hugh was obviously and delightfully happy at Mirfield. I remember well how he used to describe the pleasure of returning to it from a Mission, the silence, the simplicity of the life, the liberty underlying the order and discipline. The tone of the house was admirably friendly and kindly, without gossip, bickering or bitterness, and Hugh found himself among cheerful and sympathetic companions, with the almost childlike mirthfulness which comes of a life,

strict, ascetic, united, and free from worldly cares. He spent his first two years in study mainly, and extended his probation. It illustrates the fact that he was acquainting himself strangely little with current theological thought that the cause of his delay was that he was entirely taken aback by a sermon of Dr. Gore's on the Higher Criticism. The whole idea of it was completely novel to Hugh, and upset him terribly, so that he thought he could hardly recover his balance. Neither then nor later had he the smallest sympathy with or interest in Modernism. Finally he took the vows in 1901; my mother was present. He was installed, his hand kissed by the Brethren, and he received the Communion in entire hopefulness and happiness. I was always conscious, in those days, that Hugh radiated an atmosphere of intense rapture and ecstasy about him: the only drawback was that, in his rare visits to home, he was obviously pining to be back at Mirfield.

Then his work began; and he says that refreshed and reinvigorated as they were before going on a Mission, by long, quiet, and careful preparation, they used to plunge into their

work with ardent and eager enthusiasm. The actual mission work was hard. Hugh records that once after a Mission in London they spent four days in interviewing people and hearing confessions for eleven hours a day, with occasional sermons interspersed.

At times some of the Brothers went into residence at Westminster, in Dr. Gore's house —he was a Canon of the Abbey—and there Hugh preached his only sermon in the Abbey. But he was now devoting himself to Mission preaching, and perfecting his system. He never thought very highly of his gift of exposition. "I have a certain facility in preaching, but not much," he once said, adding, "I have far more in writing." And I have heard him say often that, if he let himself go in preaching, his tendency was to become vulgar. I have in my possession hundreds of his skeleton notes. They consist of the main points of his argument, written out clearly and underlined, with a certain amount of the texture indicated, sentence-summaries, epigrammatic statements, dicta, emphatic conclusions. He attained his remarkable facility by persistent, continuous,

and patient toil; and a glance at his note-books and fly-leaves would be the best of lessons for anyone who was tempted to depend upon fluid and easy volubility. He used to say that, after long practice, a sermon would fall into shape in a very few moments; and I remember his once taking a carefully written address of my own, summarising and denuding it, and presenting me with a little skeleton of its essence, which he implored me to use; though I had not the courage to do so. He said, too, that he believed that he could teach anyone of ordinary brain-power and choice of language to preach extempore on these lines in six months, if only he would rigidly follow his method. His arguments, in the course of his sermons, did not always seem to me very cogent; but his application of them was always most clear and effective. You always knew exactly what he was driving at, and what point he had reached; if it was not good logic, it was extremely effective logic, and you seemed to run hand in hand with him. I remember a quite admirable sermon he preached at Eton at this date—it was most

simple and moving. But at the same time the effect largely depended upon a grace of which he was unconscious—quaint, naïve, and beautiful phrasing, a fine poetical imagination, tiny word-pictures, and a youthful and impetuous charm. His gestures at that time were free and unconstrained, his voice resonant, appealing, and clear.

He used to tell innumerable stories of his sermon adventures. There was a story of a Harvest Festival sermon near Kemsing, in the days when he used a manuscript; he found on arriving at the church that he had left it behind him, and was allowed to remain in the vestry during the service, writing out notes on the insides of envelopes torn open, with the stump of a pencil which would only make marks at a certain angle. The service proceeded with a shocking rapidity, and when he got to the pulpit, spread out his envelopes, and addressed himself to the consideration of the blessings of the Harvest, he found on drawing to an end that he had only consumed about four minutes. He went through the whole again, slightly varying the phraseology, and

yet again repeated the performance; only to find, on putting on his coat, that the manuscript was in his pocket all the time.

He used to say that the most nervous experience in the world was to go into a street or market-place of a town where he was to hold a Mission with open-air sermons, and there, without accompaniment, and with such scanty adherents as he could muster, strike up a hymn. Bystanders would shrug their shoulders and go away smiling. Windows would be opened, figures would lean out, and presently withdraw again, slamming the casement.

Hugh was always extremely nervous before a sermon. He told me that when he was about to preach, he did not generally go in for the service, but remained in the vestry until the sermon; and that he would lie on a sofa or sit in a chair, in agonies of nervousness, with actual attacks of nausea, and even sickness at times, until he was summoned, feeling that he could not possibly get through. This left him after speaking a few words: but he also maintained that on the rare occasions when he felt quite

confident and free from nervousness, the result was a failure: he said that a real anxiety as to the effect of the sermon was a necessary stimulus, and evoked a mental power which confidence was apt to leave dormant.

X

THE CHANGE

Hugh has himself traced in full detail, in his book *The Confessions of a Convert*, how he gradually became convinced that it was his duty to make his submission to the Church of Rome; and I will not repeat the story here. But I can recall very distinctly the period during which he was making up his mind. He left Mirfield in the early summer of 1903, so that when I came home for the summer holidays, he was living there. I had myself just accepted from King Edward the task of editing Queen Victoria's letters, and had resigned my Eton mastership. Hugh was then engaged in writing his book *By What Authority* with inconceivable energy and the keenest possible enjoyment. His absorption in the work was extraordinary. He was reading historical books and any books bearing on the history of the period, taking notes, tran-

scribing. I have before me a large folio sheet of paper on which he has written very minutely hundreds of picturesque words and phrases of the time, to be worked into the book. He certainly soaked himself in the atmosphere of the time, and I imagine that the details are correct, though as he had never studied history scientifically, I expect he is right in saying that the mental atmosphere which he represented as existing in Elizabethan times was really characteristic of a later date. He said of the book: "I fear it is the kind of book which anyone acquainted with the history, manners, and customs of the Elizabethan age should find no difficulty in writing." He found many faults subsequently with the volume, but he convinced himself at the time that the Anglican post-Reformation Church had no identity or even continuity with the pre-Reformation Church.

He speaks of himself as undergoing an experience of great unhappiness and unrest. Undoubtedly leaving the Mirfield Community was a painful severance. He valued a friendly and sympathetic atmosphere very much, and

he was going to migrate from it into an unknown society, leaving his friends behind, with a possibility of suspicion, coldness, and misunderstanding. It was naturally made worse by the fact that all my father's best and oldest friends were Anglicans, who by position and tradition would be likely to disapprove most strongly of the step, and even feel it, if not an aspersion on my father's memory, at all events a disloyal and unfilial act—as indeed proved to be the case. But I doubt if these considerations weighed very much with Hugh. He was always extremely independent of criticism and disapproval, and though he knew many of my father's friends, through their visits to our house, he had not made friends with them on his own account—and indeed he had always been so intent on the life he was himself leading, that he had never been, so to speak, one of the Nethinims of the sanctuary; nor had the dependent and discipular attitude, the reverential attachment to venerable persons, been in the least congenial to him. He had always rather effaced himself in the presence of our ecclesiastical visitors,

and had avoided the constraint of their dignity. Indeed, up to this time he had not much gone in search of personal relationships at all except with equals and contemporaries.

But the ignorance of the world he was about to enter upon was a more serious factor in his outlook. He knew that he would have to enter submissively and humbly an entirely strange domain, that he would have to join a chilly and even suspicious circle—for I suppose a convert to any new faith is apt to be regarded, until he is fully known, as possibly weak, indeterminate, and fluctuating, and to be treated with compassion rather than admiration. With every desire to be sympathetic, people in conscious possession of security and certainty are naturally inclined to regard a claimant as bent on acquisition rather than as a hero eager for self-sacrifice.

Certainly Hugh's dejection, which I think was reserved for his tired moments, was not apparent. To me, indeed, he appeared in the light of one intent on a great adventure, with all the rapture of confidence and excitement about him. As my mother said,

he went to the shelter of his new belief as a lover might run to the arms of his beloved. Like the soldier in the old song, he did not linger, but "gave the bridle-reins a shake." He was not either melancholy or brooding. He looked very well, he was extremely active in mind and in body.

I find the following extract from my diary of August:

"*August* 1903.—In the afternoon walked with Hugh the Paxhill round. Hugh is in very good cheerful spirits, steering in a high wind straight to Rome, writing a historical novel, full of life and jests and laughter and cheerfulness; not creeping in, under the shadow of a wall, sobbing as the old cords break; but excited, eager, jubilant, enjoying."

His room was piled with books and papers; he used to rush into meals with the glow of suspended energy, eat rapidly and with appetite—I have never seen a human being who ate so fast and with so little preference as to the nature of what he ate—then he would sit absorbed for a moment, and ask to be excused, using the old childish formula:

"May I get down?" Sometimes he would come speeding out of his room, to read aloud a passage he had written to my mother, or to play a few chords on the piano. He would not as a rule join in games or walks—he went out for a short, rapid walk by himself, a little measured round, and flew back to his work. He generally, I should think, worked about eight hours a day at this time. In the evening he would play a game of cards after dinner, and would sit talking in the smoking-room, rapidly consuming cigarettes and flicking the ash off with his forefinger. He was also, I remember, very argumentative. He said once of himself that he was perpetually quarrelling with his best friends. He was a most experienced coat-trailer! My mother, my sister, my brother, Miss Lucy Tait who lives with us, and myself would find ourselves engaged in heated arguments, the disputants breathing quickly, muttering unheeded phrases, seeking in vain for a loophole or a pause. It generally ended by Hugh saying with mournful pathos that he could not understand why everyone set on him—that he never

argued in any other circle, and he could only entreat to be let alone. It is true that we were accustomed to argue questions of every kind with tenacity and even with invective. But the fact that these particular arguments always dealt with the inconsistencies and difficulties of ecclesiastical institutions revealed their origin. The fact was that at this time Hugh was accustomed to assert with much emphasis some extremely provocative and controversial position. He was markedly scornful of Anglican faults and mannerisms, and behaved both then and later as if no Anglicans could have any real and vital belief in their principles, but must be secretly ashamed of them. Yet he was acutely sensitive himself, and resented similar comments; he used to remind me of the priest who said to Stevenson: "Your sect—for it would be doing it too much honour to call it a religion," and was then pained to be thought discourteous or inconsiderate.

Discourteous, indeed, Hugh was not. I have known few people who could argue so fiercely without personal innuendo. But, on the other hand, he was both triumphant and sarcastic.

There was an occasion at a later date when he advanced some highly contestable points as assumptions, and my aunt, Mrs. Henry Sidgwick, in an agony of rationality, said to him, "But these things are surely matters of argument, Hugh?" To which Hugh replied, "Well, you see, I have the misfortune, as you regard it, of belonging to a Church which happens to know."

Here is another extract from my diary at this time:

"*August* 1903.—At dinner Hugh and I fell into a fierce argument, which became painful, mainly, I think, because of Hugh's vehemence and what I can only call violence. He reiterates his consciousness of his own stupidity in an irritating way. The point was this. He maintained that it was uncharitable to say, 'What a bad sermon So-and-so preached,' and not uncharitable to say, 'Well, it is better than the sickening stuff one generally hears'; uncharitable to say, 'What nasty soup this is!' and not uncharitable to say, 'Well, it is better than the filthy pigwash generally called soup.' I maintained that to say that, one

must have particular soups in one's mind; and that it was abusing more sermons and soups, and abusing them more severely, than if one found fault with one soup or one sermon.

"But it was all no use. He was very impatient if one joined issue at any point, and said that he was interrupted. He dragged all sorts of red herrings over the course, the opinions of Roman theologians, and differences between mortal and venial sin, &c. I don't think he even tried to apprehend my point of view, but went off into a long rigmarole about distinguishing between the sin and the sinner; and said that it was the sin one ought to blame, not the sinner. I maintained that the consent of the sinner's will was of the essence of the sin, and that the consent of the will of the sinner to what was not in itself wrong was the essence of sin—*e.g.* not sinful to drink a glass of wine, but sinful if you had already had enough.

"It was rather disagreeable; but I get so used to arguing with absolute frankness with people at Eton that I forget how unpleasant it may sound to hearers—and it all subsided very quickly, like a boiling pot."

I remember, too, at a later date, that he produced some photographs of groups of, I think, Indian converts at a Roman Catholic Mission, and stated that anyone who had eyes to see could detect which of them had been baptized by the expression of their faces. It was, of course, a matter which it was impossible to bring to the test; but he would not even admit that catechumens who were just about to be baptized could share the same expression as those who actually had been baptized. This was a good instance of his provocative style. But it was always done like a game. He argued deftly, swiftly, and inconclusively, but the fault generally lay in his premisses, which were often wild assumptions; not in his subsequent argument, which was cogent, logical, and admirably quick at finding weak points in his adversary's armour. At the same time he was wholly placable. No one could so banish and obliterate from his mind the impression of the harshest and fiercest arguments. The effervescence of his mind subsided as quickly as it arose. And my whole recollection of the period is that he was

in a state of great mental and spiritual excitement, and that he was experiencing to the full the joys of combat and action.

While the interest of composition lasted, he remained at home, but the book was soon done. He was still using the oratory in the house for celebrations, and I believe that he occasionally helped in the services of the parish church. The last time I actually heard him preach was at the previous Christmas, when the sermon seemed to me both tired and hard, as of one whose emotions were strained by an interior strife.

Among his diversions at this time he painted, on the casement windows of the oratory, some figures of saints in water-colour. The designs were quaint, but in execution they were the least successful things he ever did; while the medium he employed was more apt to exclude light than to tinge it.

These strange figures became known in the village as "Mrs. Benson's dolls." They were far more visible from outside than from within, and they looked like fantastic puppets leaning against the panes. What use my mother was

supposed to make of them, or why she piled her dolls, tier above tier, in an upper window was never explained. Hugh was very indignant when their artistic merit was called in question, but later on he silently effaced them.

The curious intensity and limitation of Hugh's affections were never more exemplified than in his devotion to a charming collie, Roddy, belonging to my sister, the most engaging dog I have ever known. Roddy was a great truant, and went away sometimes for days and even weeks. Game is carefully preserved on the surrounding estates, and we were always afraid that Roddy, in his private hunting expeditions, might fall a victim to a conscientious keeper's gun, which, alas, was doubtless the cause of his final and deeply lamented disappearance. Hugh had a great affection for Roddy, and showed it, when he came to Tremans, by keeping Roddy constantly at his heels, having him to sleep in his room, and never allowing him out of his sight. For the first day or two Roddy enjoyed these attentions, but gradually, as the visit lasted, became more and more restive, and was for

ever trying to give Hugh the slip; moreover, as soon as Hugh went away, Roddy always disappeared for a few days to recover his sense of independence and liberty. I can see Hugh now walking about in his cassock, with Roddy at his heels; then they would join a circle on the lawn, and Roddy would attach himself to some other member of the family for a little, but was always sternly whistled away by Hugh, when he went back to his room. Moreover, instead of going back to the stable to sleep snugly in the straw, which Roddy loved best, he had to come to the smoking-room, and then go back to sleep in a basket chair in Hugh's bedroom. I can remember Hugh departing at the end of his visit, and saying to me, "I know it's no use asking you—but do try to keep an eye on Roddy! It makes me miserable to think of his getting into the woods and being shot." But he did not think much about Roddy in his absence, never asked to take Roddy to Hare Street; nor did he manifest deep emotion when he finally disappeared, nor make long lamentation for him. Hugh never

wasted any time in vain regrets or unavailing pathos.

He paid visits to certain friends of my mother's to consult about his position. He did this solely out of deference to her wishes, but not, I think, with any hope that his purpose would be changed. They were, I believe, John Reeve, Rector of Lambeth, a very old and dear friend of our family, Bishop Wilkinson, and Lord Halifax. The latter stated his position clearly, that the Pope was Vicar of Christ *jure ecclesiastico* but not *jure divino*, and that it was better to remain an Anglican and promote unity so. Hugh had also a painful correspondence with John Wordsworth, late Bishop of Salisbury, a very old friend of my father's. The Bishop wrote affectionately at first, but eventually became somewhat indignant, and told Hugh plainly that a few months' work in a slum parish would clear his mind of doubt; the correspondence ended by his saying emphatically that he regarded conversion almost as a loss of sanity. No doubt it was difficult for one of immense patristic and theological learning, who was well versed

in the historical aspect of the affair as well as profoundly conscious of the reality of his own episcopal commission, to enter the lists with a son of his old friend. But neither sympathy nor harshness could have affected Hugh at this time, any more than advice to return could alter the position of a man who had taken a leap and was actually flying through the air.

Hugh then went off on a long bicycle tour by himself, dressed as a layman. He visited the Carthusian Monastery of St. Hugh, near West Grinstead, which I afterwards visited in his company. He spent a night or two at Chichester, where he received the Communion in the cathedral; but he was in an unhappy frame of mind, probably made more acute by solitude.

XI

THE DECISION

By this time we all knew what was about to happen. "When a man's mind is made up," says the old Irish proverb, "his feet must set out on the way."

Just before my brother made his profession as a Brother of the Mirfield Community, he was asked by Bishop Gore whether he was in any danger of becoming a Roman Catholic. My brother said honestly, "Not so far as I can see." This was in July 1901. In September 1903 he was received into the Church of Rome. What was it which had caused the change? It is very difficult to say, and though I have carefully read my brother's book, the *Confessions of a Convert*, I find it hard to give a decisive answer. I have no intention of taking up a controversial attitude, and indeed I am little equipped for doing so. It is clear that my brother was, and had for

some time been, searching for something, let us call it a certainty, which he did not find in the Church of England. The surprise to me is that one whose religion, I have always thought, ran upon such personal and individualistic lines, should not have found in Anglicanism the very liberty he most desired. The distinguishing feature of Anglicanism is that it allows the largest amount of personal liberty, both as regards opinion and also as regards the use of Catholic traditions, which is permitted by any ecclesiastical body in the world. The Anglican Church claims and exercises very little authority at all. Each individual Bishop has a considerable discretionary power, and some allow a far wider liberty of action than others. In all cases, divergences of doctrine and practice are dealt with by personal influence, tact, and compromise, and *force majeure* is invoked as little as possible. In the last hundred years, during which there have been strong and active movements in various directions in the Church of England both towards Catholic doctrine and Latitudinarianism, such synodical and legal action as has been

taken has generally proved to be a mistake. It is hard to justify the system logically and theoretically, but it may be said that the methods of the Church have at least been national, in the sense that they have suited the national temperament, which is independent and averse to coercive discipline. It may, I believe, be truly asserted that in England any Church which attempted any inquisition into the precise doctrine held by its lay members would lose adherents in large numbers. Of late the influence of the English Church has been mainly exerted in the cause of social reform, and her tendency is more and more to condone divergences of doctrine and opinion in the case of her ministers when they are accompanied by spiritual fervour and practical activity. The result has certainly been to pacify the intellectual revolt against religious opinion which was in full progress some forty years ago. When I myself was at the university some thirty years ago, the attitude of pronounced intellectuals against religious opinion was contemptuous and even derisive. That is not the case now. The instinct for

religion is recognised as a vital part of the human mind, and though intellectual young men are apt at times to tilt against the travesty of orthodoxy which they propound for their own satisfaction, there is a far deeper and wider tolerance and even sympathy for every form of religious belief. Religion is recognised as a matter of personal preference, and the agnostic creed has lost much of its aggressive definiteness.

It appears to me that, so far as I can measure the movement of my brother's mind, when he decided first to take Orders his religion was of a mystical and æsthetic kind; and I do not think that there is any evidence that he really examined the scientific and agnostic position at all. His heart and his sense of beauty were already engaged, and life without religion would have seemed an impossibility to him. When he took Orders his experience was threefold. At the Eton Mission he was confronted by an Anglicanism of a devout and simple kind, which concentrated itself almost entirely on the social aspect of Christianity, on the love of God and

the brotherhood of man. The object of the workers there was to create comradeship, and to meet the problems of conduct which arose by a faith in the cleansing and uplifting power of God. Brotherly love was its first aim.

I do not think that Hugh had ever any real interest in social reform, in politics, in causes, in the institutions which aim at the consolidation of human endeavour and sympathy. He had no philosophic grasp of history, nor was he a student of the psychology of religion. His instincts were all individualistic and personal; and indeed I believe that all his life he was an artist in the largest sense, in the fact that his work was the embodiment of dreams, the expression of the beauty which he constantly perceived. His ideal was in one sense a larger one than the technically artistic ideal, because it embraced the conception of moral beauty even more ardently than mere external beauty. The mystical element in him was for ever reaching out in search of some Divine essence in the world. He was not in search at any time of personal relations. He attracted more

affection than he ever gave; he rejoiced in sympathy and kindred companionship as a flower rejoices in sunshine; but I think he had little taste of the baffled suffering which accompanies all deep human passion. He once wrote: "God has preserved me extraordinarily from intimacies with others. He has done this, not I. I have longed for intimacies and failed to win them." He had little of the pastoral spirit; I do not think that he yearned over unshepherded souls, or primarily desired to seek and save the lost. On the other hand he responded eagerly to any claim made to himself for help and guidance, and he was always eager not to chill or disappoint people who seemed to need him. But he found little satisfaction in his work at the Eton Mission, and I do not think he would ever have been at home there.

At Kemsing, on the other hand, he had an experience of what I may fairly call the epicureanism of religion. The influences there were mainly æsthetic; the creation of a circle like that at Kemsing would have been impossible without wealth. Beautiful worship,

refined enjoyment, cultivated companionship were all lavished upon him. But he soon tired of this, because it was an exotic thing. It was a little paradise of a very innocent kind, from which all harsh and contradictory elements had been excluded. But this mere sipping of exquisite flavours became to him a very objectless thing, because it corresponded to no real need. I believe that if at this time he had discovered his literary gifts, and had begun seriously to write, he might have been content to remain under such conditions, at all events for a time. But he had as yet no audience, and had not begun to exercise his creative imagination. Moreover, to a nature like Hugh's, naturally temperate and ardent, and with no gross or sensuous fibre of any kind, there was a real craving for the bareness and cleanness of self-discipline and asceticism. There is a high and noble pleasure in some natures towards the reduction and disregard of all material claims and limitations, by which a freedom and expansiveness of the spirit can be won. Such self-denial gives to the soul a

freshness and buoyancy which, for those who can pursue it, is in itself an ecstasy of delight. And thus Hugh found it impossible to stay in an atmosphere which, though exquisitely refined and quiet, yet hampered the energy of aspiration and adventure.

And so he came to the Mirfield Community, and for a time found exactly what he wanted. The Brotherhood did not mainly concern itself with the organisation of social reform, while it reduced the complications of life to a spare and rigorous simplicity. The question is, why this life, which allowed him to apply all his gifts and powers to the work which still, I think, was the embodiment of his visions, did not completely satisfy him?

I think, in the first place, that it is probable that, though he was not conscious of it, the discipline and the subordination of the society did not really quite give him enough personal freedom. He continued for a time to hanker after community life; he used to say, when he first joined the Church of Rome, that he thought he might end as a Carthusian, or later on as a Benedictine. But he spoke less

and less of this as the years went on, and latterly I believe that he ceased to contemplate it, except as a possibility in case his powers of speech and writing should fail him. I believe that he really, though perhaps unconsciously, desired a freer hand, and that he found that the community life on the whole cramped his individuality. His later life was indeed a complete contrast to anything resembling community life; his constant restlessness of motion, his travels, his succession of engagements both in all parts of England as well as in Rome and America, were really, I do not doubt, more congenial to him; while his home life ultimately became only his opportunity for intense and concentrated literary work.

But beyond and above that lay the doctrinal question. He sums up what he came to believe in a few words, that the Church of Rome was "the divinely appointed centre of unity," and he felt the "absolute need of a Teaching Church to preserve and to interpret the truths of Christianity to each succeeding generation." Once convinced of this,

argument mattered little. Hugh was entirely fearless, adventurous, and independent; he had no ambitions in the ordinary sense of the word; that is to say he made no frontal attack upon promotion or respect. He was not what is called a "safe" man; he had neither caution or prudence, nor any regard for average opinion. I do not think he ever gave allegiance to any personality, nor took any direct influence from anyone. The various attempts he made to consult people of different schools of thought, all carefully recorded in his *Confessions*, were made courteously and deferentially; but it seems to me that any opposition or argument that he encountered only added fuel to the fire, and aroused his reason only to combat the suggestions with which he did not instinctively agree. Indeed I believe that it was his very isolation, his independence, his lack of any real deference to personal authority, which carried him into the Church of Rome. One who knew Hugh well and indeed loved him said to me a little bitterly that he had become a Roman Catholic not because his faith was

strong, but because it was weak. There was a touch of truth in this. Hugh did with all his heart desire to base his life upon some impersonal unquestionable certainty; and where a more submissive mind might have reposed, as a disciple, upon the strength of a master, Hugh required to repose upon something august, age-long, overpowering, a great moving force which could not be too closely or precisely interrogated, but which was a living and breathing reality, a mass of corporate experience, in spite of the inconsistencies and irrationalities which must beset any system which has built up a logical and scientific creed in eras when neither logic nor science were fully understood.

The fundamental difference between Catholicism and Protestantism lies ultimately in the old conflict between liberty and discipline, or rather in the degree to which each is valued. The most ardent lover of liberty has to admit that his own personal inclinations cannot form a satisfactory standard of conduct. He must in certain matters subjugate his will and his inclination to the prevailing laws and principles

and beliefs, and he must sacrifice his private aims and desires to the common interest, even when his reason and will may not be convinced. That is a simple matter of compromise, and the sacrifice is made as a matter of expediency and duty rather than as a matter of emotion. But there are other natures to whom it is essential to live by emotion, and to whom it is a relief and delight to submerge their private inclinations in some larger national or religious emotion. We have seen of late, in the case of Germany, what tremendous strength is generated in a nation which can adore a national ideal so passionately that they can only believe it to be a blessing to other nations to have the chance given them, through devastation and defeat, of contributing to the triumph of German ideals. I do not mean that Catholicism is prepared to adopt similarly aggressive methods. But what Hugh did not find in Anglicanism was a sense of united conviction, a world-policy, a faith in ultimate triumph, all of which he found in Catholicism. The Catholic believes that God is on his side ; the Anglican hopes that he is on the side of God.

Among Anglicans, Hugh was fretted by having to find out how much or how little each believed. Among Catholics, that can be taken for granted. They are indeed two different qualities and types of faith, and produce, or perhaps express, different types of character. Hugh found in the Roman Church the comfort of corporate ideals and corporate beliefs; and I frankly admit that the more we became acquainted with Catholicism the more did we recognise the strong and simple core of evangelicalism within it, the mutual help and counsel, the insistence on reparation as the proof of penitence, the insight into simple human needs, the paternal indulgence combined with gentle authoritativeness. All this is eminently and profoundly Christian. It is not necessary here to say what the Anglican does not find in it or at what point it seems to become inconsistent with reason and liberty. But I desire to make it clear that what Hugh needed was an emotional surrender and a sense of corporate activity, and that his conversion was not a logical one, but the discovery of a force with which his spirit was in unison, and of a

system which gave him exactly the impetus and the discipline which he required.

It is curious to note that Father Tyrrell, whom Hugh consulted, said to him that he could not receive officially any convert into the Church except on terms which were impossible to persons of reason; and this is so far true that I do not believe that Hugh's conversion was a process of either intellect or reason. I believe that it was a deep instinctive and emotional need for a basis of thought so strong and vivid that he need not question it. I believe he had long been seeking for such a basis, and that he was right to accept it, because he did so in entire simplicity and genuineness. My brother was not sceptical nor analytic; he needed the repose of a large submission, of obedience to an impersonal ideal. His work lay in the presentment of religious emotion, and for this he needed a definite and specific confidence. In no other Church, and least of all in Anglicanism, could this be obtained. I do not mean for a moment that Hugh accepted the Catholic faith simply as a conscious relief; he was

convinced frankly and fully that the Church of Christ could not be a divided society, but must have a continuity of doctrine and tradition. He believed that to be the Divine plan and method. Having done this, his duty and his delight were one. He tasted the full joy of obedience, the relief of not having to test, to question, to decide; and thus his loyalty was complete, because his heart was satisfied, and it was easier to him to mistrust his reason rather than to mistrust his heart. He had been swayed to and fro by many interests and ardours and influences; he had wandered far afield, and had found no peace in symbolism uncertain of what it symbolised, or in reason struggling to reconcile infinite contradictions. Now he rowed no more against the stream; he had found no human master to serve, and now he had found a great ancient and living force which could bear him on. That was, I think, the history of his spiritual change; and of one thing I am sure, that no surrender was ever made so guilelessly, so disinterestedly, and in so pure and simple a mood.

He has told the story of his own reception very simply and impressively. He wrote to my mother, "It has happened," and I see that he wrote also just before it to me. I quote from my diary:

"*September* 9, 1903.—Also a note from Hugh, from the Woodchester Dominican Convent, saying that he thinks he will be received this week, very short but affectionate. He says he won't attempt to say all that is in his mind. I replied, saying that I could not wish, knowing how he felt, that he should do otherwise—and I blessed him in a form of words."

It may be frankly said that however much we regretted his choice, we none of us had the slightest wish to fetter it, or to discourage Hugh from following his true and conscientious convictions. One must recognise that the sunshine and the rain of God fall in different ways and at different times upon those who desire to find Him. I do not wholly understand in my mind how Hugh came to make the change, but Carlyle speaks truly when he says that there is one moral and spiritual law for all, which is that whatever is honestly incredible to a man that

he may only at his direst peril profess or pretend to believe. And I understand in my heart that Hugh had hitherto felt like one out on the hillside, with wind and mist about him, and with whispers and voices calling out of the mist; and that here he found a fold and a comradeship such as he desired to find, and was never in any doubt again. And I am sure that he soon began to feel the tranquillity which comes from having taken, after much restlessness and anxiety, a hard course and made a painful choice.

At first, however, he was deeply conscious of the strain through which he had passed. He wrote to me in answer to the letter mentioned above:

Sept. 23, '03.

. . . Thank you so very much for your letter. It was delightful to get it. I can't tell you what happiness it has been through everything to know that you, as well as the others, felt as you did: and now your letter comes to confirm it.

There is surprisingly little to say about myself; since you ask—

I have nothing more than the deepest

possible conviction—no emotionalism or sense of relief or anything of the kind.

As regards my plans—they too are tolerably vague. . . . All the first week I was with the Dominicans—who, I imagine, will be my final destination after two or three years.

. . . I imagine that I shall begin to read Theology again, in view of future Ordination: and either I shall go to Rome at the beginning of November; or possibly to Prior Park, near Bath—a school, where I shall teach an hour a day, and read Theology.

. . . . . .

Mamma and I are meeting in London next week. She really has been good to me beyond all words. Her patience and kindness have been unimaginable.

Well—this is a dreary and egotistical letter. But you asked me to write about myself.

. . . . . .

Well—I must thank you again for your extreme kindness—I really am grateful: though I am always dumb about such things when I meet people.

. . . . . .

I remember taking a walk with Provost Hornby at Eton at this date. My diary says:

"*October* 1903.—We talked of Hugh. The Provost was very kind and wise. He said, 'Such a change is a testimony of sincerity and earnestness'; he went on to tell a story which Jowett told him of Dr. Johnson, who said, when a husband and wife of his acquaintance went over to Rome, 'God bless them both.' At the end of the walk he said to me, 'When you write to your brother, remember me very kindly to him, and give him, as a message from me, what Johnson said.' This I thought was beautiful—more than courteous."

I sent this message to Hugh, who was deeply touched by it, and wrote the Provost an affectionate and grateful letter.

Soon after this he went out to Rome to prepare himself for the Orders which he received nine months later. My mother went to see him off. As the train went out of the station, and Hugh was lost to view, my mother turned round and saw Bishop Wilkinson, one of our dearest friends, waiting for her. She had told him before that Hugh was leaving by that

train, and had asked him to bear both herself and Hugh in mind. He had not intruded on the parting, but now he drew my mother's hand into his arm and said, "If Hugh's father, when he was here on earth, would—and he would—have always wished him to follow his conscience, how much more in Paradise!" and then he went away without another word.

XII

CAMBRIDGE AGAIN

Hugh went to the College of San Silvestro in Rome, and there he found many friends. He said that on first joining the Catholic Church, he felt like a lost dog; he wrote to me:

Rome, *Nov.* 26, '03.

. . . . . .

My own news is almost impossible to tell, as everything is simply bewildering: in about five years from now I shall know how I felt; but at present I feel nothing but discomfort; I hate foreign countries and foreign people, and am finding more every day how hopelessly insular I am: because of course, under the circumstances, this is the proper place for me to be: but it is a kind of dentist's chair.

. . . . . .

But he soon parted once and for all with his sense of isolation; while the splendours of

Rome, the sense of history and state and world-wide dominion, profoundly impressed his imagination. He was deeply inspired, too, by the sight of simple and unashamed piety among the common folk, which appeared to him to put the colder and more cautious religion of England to shame. Perhaps he did not allow sufficiently for the temperamental differences between the two nations, but at any rate he was comforted and reassured.

I do not know much of his doings at this time; I was hard at work at Windsor on the Queen's letters, and settling into a new life at Cambridge; but I realised that he was building up happiness fast. One little touch of his perennial humour comes back to my mind. He was describing to me some ceremony performed by a very old and absent-minded ecclesiastic, and how two priests stood behind him to see that he omitted nothing, "With the look in their eyes," said Hugh, "that you can see in the eyes of a terrier who is standing with ears pricked at the mouth of a burrow, and a rabbit preparing to bolt from within."

He came back a priest, and before long he settled at Cambridge, living with Monsignor Barnes at Llandaff House. Monsignor Barnes was an old Eton contemporary and friend of my own, who had begun by going to Woolwich as a cadet; then he had taken orders in the Church of England, and then had joined the Church of Rome, and was put in charge of the Roman Catholic undergraduates at Cambridge. Llandaff House is a big, rather mysterious mansion in the main street of Cambridge, opposite the University Arms Hotel. It was built by the famous Bishop Watson of Llandaff, who held a professorship at Cambridge in conjunction with his bishopric, and never resided in his diocese at all. The front rooms of the big, two-gabled house are mostly shops; but the back of the house remains a stately little residence, with a chapel, a garden with some fine trees, and opens on to the extensive and quiet park of Downing College.

Hugh had a room which looked out on to the street, where he did his writing. From that date my real friendship with him began, if I may use the word. Before that, the differ-

ence in our ages, and the fact that I was a very busy schoolmaster only paying occasional visits to home, had prevented our seeing very much of each other in anything like equal comradeship. But at the beginning of 1905 I went into residence at Magdalene as a Fellow, and Hugh was often in and out, while I was made very welcome at Llandaff House. Hugh had a small income of his own, and he began to supplement it by writing. His needs and tastes were all entirely simple. He seems to me, remembering him, to have looked extremely youthful in those days, smaller in some ways than he did later. He moved very rapidly; his health was good and his activity great. He made friends at several of the colleges, he belonged to the Pitt Club, and he used to attend meetings of an undergraduates' debating club—the Decemviri—to which he had himself belonged. One of the members of that time has since told me that he was the only older man he had ever known who really mixed with undergraduates and debated with them on absolutely equal terms. But indeed, so far as looks went,

though he was now thirty-four, he might almost have been an undergraduate himself.

We arranged always to walk together on Sunday afternoons. As an old member of King's College, I had a key of the garden there in the Backs, and a pass-key of the college gates, which were locked on Sunday during the chapel service. We always went and walked about that beautiful garden with its winding paths, or sat out in the bowling-green. Then we generally let ourselves into the college grounds, and went up to the south porch of the chapel, where we could hear the service proceeding within. I can remember Hugh saying, as the Psalms came to an end: "Anglican double chants—how comfortable and delicious, and how entirely irreligious!"

We talked very freely and openly of all that was in our minds, and sometimes even argued on religion. He used to tell me that I was much nearer to his form of faith than most Anglicans, and I can remember his saying that the misery of being an Anglican was that it was all so rational—you had to

make up your mind on every single point. "Why not," he said, "make it up on one point—the authority of the Church, and have done with it?" "Because I can't be dictated to on points in which I feel I have a right to an opinion." "Ah, that isn't a faith!" "No, only a faith in reason." At which he would shrug his shoulders, and smile. Once I remember his exhibiting very strong emotion. I had spoken of the worship of the Virgin, and said something that seemed to him to be in a spirit of levity. He stopped and turned quite pale. "Ah, don't say that!" he said; "I feel as if you had said something cynical about someone very dear to me, and far more than that. Please promise not to speak of it again."

It was in these days that I first perceived the extraordinary charm of both mind and manner that he possessed. In old days he had been amusing and argumentative enough, but he was often silent and absorbed. I think his charm had been developed by his new experiences, and by the number of strangers he had been brought into contact with; he

had learned an eager and winning sort of courtesy, which grew and increased every year. On one point we wholly and entirely agreed—namely, in thinking rudeness of any kind to be not a mannerism, but a deadly sin. "I find injustice or offensiveness to myself or anyone else," he once wrote, "the hardest of all things to forgive." We concurred in detesting the habit of licensing oneself to speak one's mind, and the unpleasant English trait of confusing sincerity with frank brutality. There is a sort of Englishman who thinks he has a right, if he feels cross or contemptuous, to lay bare his mood without reference to his companion's feelings; and this seemed to us both the ugliest of phenomena.

Hugh saw a good deal of academic society in a quiet way—Cambridge is a hospitable place. I remember the consternation which was caused by his fainting away suddenly after a Feast at King's. He had been wedged into a corner, in front of a very hot fire, by a determined talker, and suddenly collapsed. I was fetched out to see him, and found him stretched on a form in the Hall vestibule, being kindly

cared for by the Master of a College, who was an eminent surgeon and a professor. Again I remember that we entered the room together when dining with a hospitable Master, and were introduced to a guest, to his bewilderment, as "Mr. Benson" and "Father Benson." "I must explain," said our host, "that Father Benson is not Mr. Benson's father!" "I should have imagined that he might be his son!" said the guest.

After Hugh had lived at Llandaff House for a year he accepted a curacy at the Roman Catholic church at Cambridge. I do not know how this came about. A priest can be ordained "to a bishop," in which case he has to go where he is sent, or "on his patrimony," which gives him a degree of independence. Hugh had been ordained "on his patrimony," but he was advised to take up ministerial work. He accordingly moved into the Catholic rectory, a big, red-brick house, with a great cedar in front of it, which adjoins the church. He had a large sitting-room, looking out at the back over trees and gardens, with a tiny bedroom adjoining. He had now the

Photo by Russell & Sons

ROBERT HUGH BENSON

IN 1907. AGED 35

command of more money, and the fitting up of his rooms was a great delight to him; he bought some fine old oak furniture, and fitted the walls with green hangings, above which he set the horns of deer, which he had at various times stalked and shot—he was always a keen sportsman. I told him it was too secular an ornament, but he would not hear me.

Canon Scott, the rector, the kindest and most hospitable of men, welcomed me to the rectory, and I was often there; and our Sunday walks continued. Hugh became known at once as the best preacher in Cambridge, and great congregations flocked to hear him. I do not think he had much pastoral work to do; but now a complication ensued. A good many undergraduates used to go to hear him, ask to see him, discuss religious problems with him. Moreover, before he left the Anglican communion, Hugh had conducted a mission at Cambridge, with the result that several of his hearers became Roman Catholics. A certain amount of orthodox alarm was felt and expressed at the new and attractive religious element which

his sermons provided, and eventually representations were made to me that I should use my influence with Hugh that he should leave Cambridge. This I totally declined to do, and suggested that the right way to meet it was to get an Anglican preacher to Cambridge of persuasive eloquence and force. I did eventually speak to Hugh about it, and he was indignant. He said: "I have not attempted, and I shall not attempt, any sort of proselytisation of undergraduates—I do not think it fair, or even prudent. I have never started the subject of religion on any occasion with any undergraduate. But I must preach what I believe; and, of course, if undergraduates consult me, I shall tell them what I think and why I think it." This rule he strictly adhered to; and I do not know of any converts that he made.

Moreover, it was at this time that strangers, attracted by his sermons and his books, began to consult him by letter, and seek interviews with him. In this relation he showed himself, I have reason to know, extraordinarily kind, sympathetic, and straightforward. He wrote

fully and as often as he was consulted; he saw an ever-increasing number of inquirers. He used to groan over the amount of time he had to spend in letters and interviews, and he used to say that it often happened that the people least worth helping took up the most time. He always gave his very best; but the people who most vexed him were those engaged in religious inquiry, not out of any profound need, but simply for the emotional luxury; and who argued round and round in a circle for the pleasure of being sympathised with. Hugh was very clear and practical in his counsels, and he was, I used to think, like a wise and even stern physician, never influenced by sentiment. It was always interesting to discuss a "case" with him. I do not mean that he discussed his cases with me, but I used to ask him how to deal with some intellectual or moral problem, and his insight seemed to me wonderfully shrewd, sensible, and clear. He had a masterly analysis, and a power of seeing alternatives and contingencies which always aroused my admiration. He was less interested in the personal element than in the psychological;

and I used to feel that his strength lay in dealing with a case scientifically and technically. Sometimes he had desperate, tragic, and even alarming cases to deal with; and here his fearlessness and toughness stood him in good stead. He never shrank appalled before any moral enormity. He told me once of a series of interviews he had with a man, not a Catholic, who appealed to him for help in the last extremity of moral degradation. He became aware at last that the man was insane, but he spared no pains to rescue him.

When he first began this work he had a wave of deep unhappiness; the responsibility of the priesthood so overwhelmed him that for a time, I have learned, he used to pray night after night, that he might die in his sleep, if it were possible. I saw and guessed nothing of this, but I think it was a mood of exhaustion, because he never exhibited anything but an eager and animated interest in life.

One of his pleasures while he was at Cambridge and ever after was the writing, staging, and rehearsing of little mystery-

plays and sacred scenes for the children of St. Mary's Convent at Cambridge and for the choir boys of Westminster Cathedral. These he thoroughly enjoyed; he always loved the companionship of children, and had exactly the right way with them, treating them seriously, paternally, with a brisk authority, and never sentimentally. They were beautiful and moving little dramas, reverently performed. Unhappily I never saw one of them. Even now I remember with a stab of regret that he came to stay with me at Cambridge for one of these, and besought me to go with him. But I was shy and busy, and though I could easily have arranged to go, I did not and he went off alone. "Can't you really manage it?" he said. "Pray-a-do!" But I was obdurate, and it gives me pain now to think that I churlishly refused, though it is a false pathos to dwell on such things, and both foolish and wrong to credit the dead with remembering trifling grievances.

But I do not think that his time at the Catholic rectory was a really very happy

one. He needed more freedom; he became gradually aware that his work lay in the direction of writing, of lecturing, of preaching, and of advising. He took his own measure and knew his own strength. "I have *no* pastoral gift," he once said to me very emphatically. "I am not the man to *prop*," he once wrote; "I can kindle sometimes, but not support. People come to me and pass on." Nor was he at ease in the social atmosphere of Cambridge—it seemed to him bleak, dry, complacently intellectual, unimaginative. He felt himself what the law describes as "a suspected person," with vague designs on the spiritual life of the place.

At first, he was not rich enough to live the sort of life he desired; but he began to receive a larger income from his books, and to see that it would soon be in his power to make a home for himself. It was then that our rambles in search of possible houses began, while at the same time he curtailed his own personal expenditure to the lowest limits, till his wardrobe became conspicuous for its antiquity. This, however, he was

wholly indifferent about; his aim was to put together a sufficient sum to buy a small house in the country, and there to settle "for ever," as he used to say. "A small Perpendicular chapel and a white-washed cottage next door is what I want just now," he wrote about this time. "It must be in a sweet and secret place —preferably in Cornwall." Or again, "I want and mean—if it is permitted—to live in a small cottage in the country; to say mass and office, and to write books. I think that is honestly my highest ideal. I hate fuss and officialdom and backbiting—I wish to be at peace with God and man." This was his dream. The house at Hare Street was the result.

XIII

HARE STREET

I HAVE no doubt at all that Hugh's seven years at Hare Street were the happiest of his life. He generally had some companion living there—Mr. Gabriel Pippet, who did much skilful designing and artistic work with and for him; Dr. Sessions, who managed his household affairs and acted as a much needed secretary; Father Watt, who was in charge of the Hormead Mission. At one time he had the care of a little boy, Ken Lindsay, which was, I think, the greatest joy he ever had. He was a most winning and affectionate child, and Hugh's love of children was very great. He taught Ken, played with him, told him stories. Among his papers are little touching trifles which testify to his love of the child—a withered flower, or some leaves in an envelope, "flower which Ken gave me," "leaves with which Ken tried to make

Mr. J. Reeman. Ken. R. H. Benson.

AT HARE STREET, 1909

a crown," and there are broken toys of Ken's put away, and little games and pictures which Hugh contrived for his pleasure, memories of happy days and hours. He used to talk about Ken and tell stories about his sayings and doings, and for a time Ken's presence gave a sense of home about Hare Street, and filled a part of Hugh's heart as nothing else did. It was a pleasure to see them together; Hugh's whole voice and bearing changed when Ken was with him, but he did not spoil him in the least or indulge him foolishly. I remember sitting with Hugh once when Ken was playing about, and how Hugh followed him with his eyes or listened to Ken's confidences and discoveries. But circumstances arose which made it necessary that Ken should go, and the loss of him was a great grief to Hugh—though even so, I admired the way in which he accepted the necessity. He always loved what he had got, but did not miss it if he lost it.

He made friends, too, with the people of the village, put his chapel at their disposal for daily use, and had a Christmas festival

there for them. He formed pleasant acquaintances with his country neighbours, and used to go to fish or shoot with them, or occasionally to dine out. He bought and restored a cottage which bordered on his garden, and built another house in a paddock beyond his orchard, both of which were let to friends. Thus it was not a solitary life at all.

He had in his mind for a long time a scheme which he intended to carry out as soon as he had more leisure,—for it must be remembered that much of his lecturing and occasional writing was undertaken simply to earn money to enable him to accomplish his purposes. This was to found a community of like-minded people, who desired more opportunity for quiet devotion and meditation, for solitary work and contemplation, than the life of the world could afford them. Sometimes he designed a joint establishment, sometimes small separate houses; but the essence of it all was solitude, cheered by sympathy and enough friendly companionship to avoid morbidity. At one time he planned a boys' home, in connection with the work of his friend Mr. Norman Potter, at another a home

of rest for troubled and invalided people, at another a community for poor and sensitive people, who "if they could get away from squalor and conflict, would blow like flowers." With his love of precise detail, he drew up time-tables, so many hours for devotion and meditation, so many for work and exercise, so many for sociability.

But gradually his engagements increased so that he was constantly away, preaching and lecturing; and thus he was seldom at home for more than two or three days at a time. Thrice he went to Rome to preach courses of sermons, and thrice he went to America, where he made many friends. Until latterly he used to go away for holidays of various kinds, a motor tour in France, a trip to Switzerland, where he climbed mountains; and he often went to stay with Lord Kenmare at Killarney, where he stalked deer, shot and fished, and lived an out-of-door life. I remember his describing to me an incident on one of those visits, how he was returning from a deer-stalk, in the roughest clothes, when he saw a little group of people in a by-lane, and

presently a message arrived to say that there was a dying woman by the roadside, and could he go to her. He went in haste, heard her confession, and gave her absolution, while the bystanders withdrew to a distance, that no word might be overheard, and stood bareheaded till the end came.

His engagement-books, of which I have several, show a dangerous activity; it is difficult to see how any man could have done so much of work involving so much strain. But he had a clear idea in his mind. He used to say that he did not expect to have a long life. "Many thanks," he wrote to a friend in 1905, in reply to a birthday letter. "I certainly want happy returns; but not very many." He also said that he was prepared for a break-down in his powers. He intended to do his work in his own way, and as much as he could, while his strength lasted. At the same time he was anxious to save enough money to enable him to live quietly on at Hare Street whatever happened. The result was that even when he came back from his journeys the time at Hare Street was never a

R. H. Benson. Dr. F. L. Sessions.

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HARE STREET, IN THE GARDEN

JULY 1911

rest. He worked from morning to night at some piece of writing, and there were very few commissions for articles or books which he refused. He said latterly, in reply to an entreaty from his dear friend Canon Sharrock, who helped him to die, that he would take a holiday: "No, I never take holidays now—they make me feel so self-conscious."

He was very careful to keep up with his home and his family ties. He used to pay regular visits to Tremans, my mother's house, and was generally there at Christmas or thereabouts. Latterly he had a Christmas festival of his own at Hare Street, with special services in the chapel, with games and medals for the children, and with presents for all alike—children, tenants, servants, neighbours, and friends. My sister, who lately spent a Christmas with him, says that it was more like an ideal Christmas than anything she had ever seen, and that he himself, full of eagerness and kindness and laughter, was the centre and mainspring of it all. He used to invite himself over to Cambridge not infrequently for a night or two; and I used to run over for a day to

Hare Street to see his improvements and to look round. I remember once going there for an afternoon and suggesting a stroll. We walked to a hamlet a little way off, but to my surprise he did not know the name of it, and said he had never been there. I discovered that he hardly ever left his own little domain, but took all his exercise in gardening or working with his hands. He had a regular workroom at one time in the house, where he carved, painted, or stitched tapestries—but it was all intent work. When he came to Cambridge for a day, he would collect books from all parts of the house, read them furiously, "tearing the heart out of them" like Dr. Johnson. Everything was done thus, at top speed. His correspondence was enormous; he seldom failed to acknowledge a letter, and if his advice were asked he would write at great length, quite ungrudgingly; but his constant writing told on his script. Ten years ago it was a very distinctive, artistic, finely formed hand, very much like my father's, but latterly it grew cramped and even illegible, though it always had a peculiar character, and,

as is often the case with very marked handwritings, it tended to be unconsciously imitated by his friends.

I used to wonder, in talk with him, how he found it possible to stay about so much in all sorts of houses, and see so many strange people. "Oh, one gets used to it," he said, adding: "besides, I am quite shameless now —I say that I must have a room to myself where I can work and smoke, and people are very good about that."

XIV

AUTHORSHIP

As to Hugh's books, I will here say a few words about them, because they were a marked part of himself; he put much skill and care into making them, and took fully as much rapture away. When he was writing a book, he was like a man galloping across country in a fresh sunny morning, and shouting aloud for joy. But I do not intend to make what is called an appreciation of them, and indeed am little competent to do so. I do not know the conventions of the art or the conditions of it. "Oh, I see," said a critical friend to me not long ago in much disgust, "you read a novel for the ideas and the people and the story." "What do you read it for?" I said. "Why, to see how it is done, of course," he replied. Personally I have never read a book in my life to see how it is done, and what interests me, apart from the book, is the person behind it—

and that is very elementary. Moreover, I have a particular dislike of all historical novels. Fact is interesting and imagination is interesting; but I do not care for webs of imagination hung on pegs of fact. Historical novels ought to be like memoirs, and they are never in the least like memoirs; in fact they are like nothing at all, except each other.

The Light Invisible always seemed to me a beautiful book. It was in 1902 that Hugh began to write it, at Mirfield. He says that a book of stories of my own, *The Hill of Trouble*, put the idea into his head—but his stories have no resemblance to mine. Mine were archaic little romances, written in a style which a not unfriendly reviewer called "painfully kind," an epigram which always gave Hugh extreme amusement. His were modern, semi-mystical tales; he says that he personally came to dislike the book intensely from the spiritual point of view, as being feverish and sentimental, and designed unconsciously to quicken his own spiritual temperature. He adds that he thought the book mischievous, as laying stress on mystical intuition rather than

Divine authority, and because it substituted the imagination for the soul. That is a dogmatic objection rather than a literary objection; and I suppose he really disliked it because it reminded him later on of a time when he was moving among shadows. But it was the first book in which he spread his wings, and there is, I think, a fresh and ingenuous beauty about it, as of a delighted adventure among new faculties and powers.

I believe that the most beautiful book he ever wrote was *Richard Raynal, Solitary;* and I know he thought so himself. Of course it is an archaic book, and written, as musicians say, in a *mode.* It is easier in some ways to write a book in a style which is not authentically one's own, and literary imitation is not the highest art; but *Richard Raynal* has the beauty of a fine tapestry designed on antique lines, yet replenished and enriched by modern emotion, like Tennyson's *Mort d'Arthur.* Yet I am sure there is a deep charm of pure beauty in the book, both of thought and handling, and I believe that he put into it the best essence of his feeling and imagination.

As to his historical books, I can feel their vigour and vitality, and their deft use of old hints and fragments. I remember once discussing one of them with him, and saying that his description of Queen Elizabeth seemed to me very vivid, but that it reminded me of a not very authentic picture of that queen, in spangled crimson and lace, which hung in the hall at Addington. Hugh laughed, and said: "Well, I must confess that very picture was in my mind!"

With regard to his more modern stories it is impossible not to be impressed by their lightness and swiftness, their flashes of beauty and emotion, their quick rippling talk; but it is hard, at times, not to feel them to be vitiated by their quite unconscious tendency to represent a point of view. They were once called by a malign reviewer "the most detestable kind of tract," and though this is what the French call a *saugrenu* criticism, which implies something dull, boorish, and provincial, yet it is easy to recognise what is meant. It is not unjust to resent the appearance of the cultivated and sensitive Anglican, highly bred and graceful, who is

sure to turn out hard and hollow-hearted, or the shabby, trotting, tobacco-scented Roman Catholic priest, who is going to emerge at a crisis as a man of inspired dignity and solemnity. Sometimes, undoubtedly, the books are too intent upon expunging other forms of religious life, rather than in tracing the movements of the soul. Probably this was inseparable from the position Hugh had taken up, and there was not the slightest pose, or desire to improve the situation about his mind. The descriptions, the lightly-touched details, the naturalness and ease of the talk are wholly admirable. He must have been a very swift observer, both of nature and people, because he never gave the least impression of observing anything. I never saw him stop to look at a view, or go into raptures over anything beautiful or picturesque; in society he was either silent and absorbed, or more commonly extremely animated and expansive. But he never seemed to be on the look-out for any impressions at all, and still less to be recording them.

I believe that all his books, with the exception, perhaps, of *Richard Raynal*, can be called

brilliant improvisations rather than deliberate works of art. "I write best," he once said, "when I rely most on imagination." The time which elapsed from his conception of an idea to the time when the book was completed was often incredibly short. I remember his telling me his first swift thought about *The Coward;* and when I next asked him about it, the book had gone to the publishers and he was writing another. When he was actually engaged in writing he was oblivious of all else, and lived in a sort of dream. I have several sketches of books which he made. He used to make a rough outline, a kind of *scenario*, indicating the gradual growth of the plot. That was done rapidly, and he always said that the moment his characters were conceived, they began to haunt his mind with emphatic vividness; but he wrote very fast, and a great quantity at a time. His life got fuller and fuller of engagements, but he would get back to Hare Street for a day or two, when he would write from morning to night with a brief interval for gardening or handicraft, and briefer intervals for meals. He was

fond of reading aloud bits of the books, as they grew. He read all his books aloud to my mother in MS., and paid careful heed to her criticisms, particularly with reference to his female characters, though it has been truly said that the women in his novels are mostly regarded either as indirect obstacles or as direct aids to conversion.

Mr. Belloc once said, very wisely and truly, that inertia was the breeding-ground of inspiration. I think, on the whole, that the total and entire absence of any species of inertia in Hugh's temperament reacted in a way unfavourably on his books. I do not think they simmered in his mind, but were projected, hot and smoking, from the fiery crucible of thought. There seems to me a breathless quality about them. Moreover I do not think that there is much trace of the subtle chemistry of mutual relations about his characters. In life, people undergo gradual modifications, and other people exert psychological effects upon them. But in Hugh's books the characters are all fiercely occupied in being themselves from start to finish ; they have exhausted moods, but they

ROBERT HUGH BENSON

IN 1910. AGED 39

have not dull or vacant moods; they are always typical and emphatic. This is really to me the most interesting thing about his books, that they are all projections of his own personality into his characters. He is behind them all; and writing with Hugh was, like so many things that he did, a game which he played with all his might. I have spoken about this elsewhere, because it accounted for much in his life; and when he was engaged in writing, there was always the delicious sense of the child, furiously and absorbingly at play, about him.

It is said that no artist is ever really interested in another artist's work. My brothers, Fred and Hugh, my sister and myself would sometimes be at home together, and all writing books. Hugh was, I think, always the first inclined to produce his work for inspection; but we had a tacit convention which was not in the least unsympathetic, not to feel bound to be particularly interested in each other's books. My books, I felt, bored Hugh more than his bored me; but there was this advantage, that when we read each other's books, as we often did, any critical

praise that we could offer was much more appreciated than if we had felt bound to proffer conventional admiration. Hugh once told me that he envied my *sostenuto;* but on another occasion, when I said I had nothing to write about, and feared I had written too many books, Hugh said: "Why not write a book about having nothing to write about?" It was good advice and I took it. I can remember his real and obvious pleasure when I once praised *Richard Raynal* to him with all my might. But though he enjoyed praise, it was always rather because it confirmed his own belief that his work was worth doing. He did not depend in the smallest degree either upon applause or sympathy. Indeed, by the time that a book was out, he had generally got another on the stocks, and did not care about the previous one at all.

Neither do I think that his books emanated from a high artistic ideal. I do not believe that he was really much interested in his craft. Rather he visualised a story very vividly, and then it seemed to him the finest fun in the world to spin it all as rapidly as he

could out of his brain, to make it all alert with glancing life. It was all a personal confession; his books bristle with his own dreams, his own dilemmas, his own social relations; and when he had once firmly realised the Catholic attitude, it seemed to him the one thing worth writing about.

While I write these pages I have been dipping into *The Conventionalists*. It is full of glow and drama, even melodrama; but somehow it does not recall Hugh to my mind. That seems strange to me, but I think of him as always larger than his books, less peremptory, more tolerant, more impatient of strain. The book is full of strain; but then I remember that in the old days, when he played games, he was a provoking and even derisive antagonist, and did not in the least resent his adversaries being both; and I come back to my belief in the game, and the excitement of the game. I do not, after all, believe that his true nature flowed quite equably into his books, as I think it did into *The Light Invisible* and *Richard Raynal*. It was a demonstration, and he enjoyed using his skill and adroitness;

he loved to present the smouldering and flashing of passions, the thrill and sting of which he had never known. Saved as he was by his temperament alike from deep suffering and tense emotion, and from any vital mingling either with the scum and foam or with the stagnancy and mire of life, the books remain as a brilliant illusion, with much of the shifting hues and changing glimmer of his own ardent and restless mind rippling over the surface of a depth which is always a little mysterious as to the secrets it actually holds.

XV

FAILING HEALTH

HUGH's health on the whole was good up to the year 1912, though he had a troublesome ailment, long ignored, which gave him a good deal of malaise. He very much disliked being spoken to about his health, and accepted no suggestions on the subject. But he determined at the end of 1912, after enduring great pain, to have an operation, which was quite successful, but the shock of which was considerable. He came down to Tremans just before, and it was clear that he suffered greatly; but so far from dreading the operation, he anticipated it with a sense of immense relief, and after it was over, though he was long unwell, he was in the highest spirits. But he said after he came back from Rome that he felt ten years older; and I can recall his coming down to Cambridge not long after, and indulging one evening in an immense

series of yawns, for which he apologised, saying, "I'm tired, I'm tired—not at the top, but deep down inside, don't you know?"

But it was not until 1914 that his health really declined. He came over to Cambridge at the beginning of August, when the war was impending. He stayed with me over the Sunday; he was tired and overstrained, complained that he felt unable to fix his mind upon anything, and he was in considerable depression about the possibility of war. I have never seen him so little able to throw off an anxiety; but he dined in Hall with me on the Sunday night, met some old friends, and was full of talk. He told me later in the evening that he was in much anxiety about some anonymous menace which he had received. He would not enter into details, but he spoke very gravely about it. However, later in the month, I went over with a friend to see him at Hare Street, and found him in cheerful spirits in spite of everything. He had just got the place, he said, into perfect order, and now all it wanted was to be left alone. It was a day of bright hot sunlight,

A. C. Benson.
Aged 51.

R. H. Benson.
Aged 42.

E. F. Benson.
Aged 46.

Photo by H. Abbott, Lindfield

AT TREMANS, HORSTED KEYNES

DECEMBER 1913

and we lunched out of doors near the chapel under the shade of the yew-trees. He produced a peculiar and pleasant wine, which he had made on the most scientific principles out of his own grapes. We went round and looked at everything, and he showed me the preparation for the last adornment, which was to be a rose garden near the chapel. We walked into the orchard and stood near the Calvary, little thinking that he would be laid to rest there hardly two months later.

The weeks passed on, and at the end of September I went to stay near Ambleside with some cousins, the Marshalls, in a beautiful house called Skelwith Fold, among lovely woodlands, with the mountains rising on every side, and a far-off view down Langdale. Here I found Hugh staying. He was writing some Collects for time of war, and read many of them aloud to me for criticism. He was also painting in oils, attempting very difficult landscapes with considerable success. They stood drying in the study, and he was much absorbed in them; he also was fishing keenly in a little trout lake near the house, and walk-

ing about with a gun. His spirits were very equable and good. But he told me that he had gone out shooting in September over some fields lent him by a neighbour, and had had to return owing to breathlessness; and he added that he suffered constantly from breathlessness and pain in the chest and arms, that he could only walk a few paces at a time, and then had to rest to recover his breath. He did not seem to be anxious about it, but he went down one morning to celebrate Mass at Ambleside, refusing the offer of the car, and found himself in such pain that he then and there went to a doctor, who said that he believed it to be indigestion.

He sat that morning after breakfast with me, smoking, and complaining that the pain was very severe. But he did not look ill; and the pain suddenly left him. "Oh what bliss!" he said. "It's gone, suddenly and entirely—and now I must go out and finish my sketch."

The only two things that made me feel anxious were that he had given up smoking to a considerable extent, and that he said he

meant to consult our family doctor; but he was so lively and animated—I remember one night the immense zest and intensity with which he played a game of throwing an old pack of cards across the room into the grate —that it was impossible to think that his condition was serious.

Indeed, I said good-bye to him when he went off, without the least anticipation of evil. My real hope was that he would be told he had been overdoing it, and ordered to rest; and a few days later, when I heard that this was what the doctor advised, I wrote to him suggesting that he should come and settle at Cambridge for a couple of months, do exactly what he liked, and see as much or as little of people as he liked. It seems that he showed this letter to one of the priests at Manchester, and said, "There, that is what I call a real invitation—that is what I shall do!"

Dr. Ross-Todd saw him, and told him that it was a neuralgic affection, "false angina," and that his heart was sound, but that he must diminish his work. He pleaded to be allowed

to finish his imminent engagements ; the doctor said that he might do that, if he would put off all subsequent ones. This was wisely done, in order to reassure him, as he was an excitable though not a timid patient. He was at Hare Street for a day or two, and his trusted servant, Mr. Reeman, tells me that he seemed ill and out of spirits. The last words he said as he drove away, looking round the lime-encircled lawn, were, "Ah! the leaves will all be gone when I come home again."

He preached at Salford on October 4, and went to Ulverston on October 5, where he conducted a mission. On October 10 he returned, and Canon Sharrock says that he arrived in great pain, and had to move very slowly. But he preached again on October 11, though he used none of the familiar gestures, but stood still in the pulpit. He suffered much after the sermon, and rested long in a chair in the sacristy. He started to go to London on the Monday morning, but had to return in the taxi, feeling too ill to travel. Then followed days of acute pain, during which he no doubt caught a severe chill. He could not sleep, and

he could only obtain relief by standing up. He wandered restlessly one night about the corridors, very lightly clad, and even went out into the court. He stood for two or three hours leaning on the mantelpiece of his room, with Father Gorman sitting near him, and trying in vain to persuade him to retire to bed.

When he was not suffering he was full of life, and even of gaiety. He went one of these afternoons, at his own suggestion, to a cinema show with one of the priests, but though he enjoyed it, and even laughed heartily, he said later that it had exhausted him.

He wrote some letters, putting off many of his autumn and winter engagements. But he grew worse; a specialist was called in, and, though the diagnosis was entirely confirmed, it was found that pneumonia had set in.

XVI

THE END

I HAD spent a long day in London at a business meeting, where we discussed a complicated educational problem. I came away alone; I was anxious to have news of my sister, who had that morning undergone a slight operation; but I was not gravely disquieted, because no serious complications were expected.

When I reached my house there were two telegrams awaiting me, one to say that the operation had gone well, the other from Canon Sharrock, of Salford, to say that my brother was dangerously ill of pneumonia. I wired at once for a further report, and before it arrived made up my mind that I must go to him. I waited till the reply came—it was a little more favourable—went up to London, and caught a midnight train for Manchester.

The news had the effect which a sudden shock is apt to have, of inducing a sense of

curious unreality. I neither read nor slept, nor even thought coherently. I was just aware of disaster and fear. I was alone in my compartment. Sometimes we passed through great, silent, deserted stations, or stopped outside a junction for an express to pass. At one or two places there was a crowd of people, seeing off a party of soldiers, with songs and cheers. Farther north I was aware at one time that the train was labouring up a long incline, and I had a faint sense of relief when suddenly the strain relaxed, and the train began to run swiftly and smoothly downwards; I had just one thought, the desire to reach my brother, and over and over again the dread of what I might hear.

It was still dark and chilly when I arrived at Manchester. The great station was nearly empty. I drove hurriedly through dimly-lit streets. Sometimes great factories towered up, or dark house-fronts shuttered close. Here there were high steel networks of viaducts overhead, or parapets of bridges over hidden waterways. At last I came to where a great church towered up, and an iron-studded door in a

blank wall appeared. I was told this was the place, and pushing it open I went up a stone-flagged path, among beds of soot-stained shrubs, to where a lantern shone in the porch of a sombre house. There was a window high up on the left, where a shaded lamp was burning and a fire flickered on the ceiling, and I knew instinctively that this was my brother's room. I rang, and presently a weary-eyed, kindly priest, in a hastily-donned cassock, appeared. He said at once that my brother was a little better and was asleep. The doctors were to see him at nine. I asked where I could go, and he advised a hotel hard by. "We did not expect you," he said, "or we would have had a room ready, but now I fear we could hardly make you comfortable."

I went to the hotel, a big, well-equipped place, and was taken to a bedroom, where I slept profoundly, out of utter weariness. Then I went down to the Bishop's House again at nine o'clock. By daylight Manchester had a grim and sinister air. It was raining softly, and the air was heavy with smoke. The Bishop's House stood in what was evidently a

Photo by Lofthouse, Crosbie & Co.

BISHOP'S HOUSE, SALFORD

The Church on the left is the transept of St. John's Cathedral, Salford, where Hugh preached his last sermon. The room in which he died was the Bishop's library. One of its windows is visible on the first floor to the left of the porch.

poor quarter, full of mean houses and factories, all of red brick, smeared and stained with soot. The house itself appeared like a great college, with paved corridors, dark arches, and many doors. There was a lighted room like a sacristy, and a faint scent of incense drifted in from the door which led into the church. Upstairs, in a huge throne-room with a gilded chair of state and long, bare tables, I met the doctors—Dr. Bradley, a Catholic, and Professor Murray, a famous Manchester physician, in khaki uniform, both most gentle and kind. Canon Sharrock joined us, a tall, robust man, with a beautiful tenderness of manner and a brotherly air. They gave me a better report, but could not disguise from me that things were very critical. It was pneumonia of a very grave kind which had supervened on a condition of overwork and exhaustion. I see now that they had very little hope of recovery, but I did not wholly perceive it then.

Then I went with the Canon to the end of the room. I saw two iron cylinders on the table with brass fittings, and somehow knew that they contained oxygen.

The Canon knocked, and Hugh's voice said, clearly and resonantly, "Come in." I found him in bed, in a big library, the Bishop's own room. There were few signs of illness except a steam-kettle and a few bottles; a nurse was in the adjoining room. He was unable to speak very much, as his throat troubled him; but he was full of humour and brightness. I told him such news as I could think of. He knew that I was very busy, but was pleased that I had come to see him. He said that he felt really better, and that I should be able to go back the next day. He said a few words about a will he had made, but added, "Mind, I don't think I am going to die! I did yesterday, but I feel really better. This is only by way of precaution." We talked about a friend of mine in Manchester, a militant Protestant. "Yes," said Hugh, "he spoke of me the other day as a 'hell-hound'—not very tactful!" He said that he could not sleep for long together, but that he did not feel tired—only bored. I was told I must not stay long with him. He said once or twice, "It's awfully good of you to have come."

I went away after a little, feeling very much reassured. He did not give the impression of being gravely ill at all, he was so entirely himself. I wrote a few letters and then returned, while he ate his luncheon, a baked apple—but this was painful to him and he soon desisted. He talked again a little, with the same liveliness, but as he began to be drowsy, I left him again.

Dr. Bradley soon came to me, and confessed he felt anxious. "It may be a long and critical business," he said. "If he can maintain his strength like this for several days, he may turn the corner—he is a difficult patient. He is not afraid, but he is excitable, and is always asking for relief and suggesting remedies." I said something about summoning the others. "On no account," he said. "It would give him the one impression we must try to avoid—much depends upon his own hopefulness."

I went back to my hotel, slumbered over a book, went in for a little to the cathedral service, and came back about five o'clock. The nurse was not in the room at the moment. Hugh said a few words to me, but had a sudden

attack of faintness. I gave him a little whisky at his own request, the doctor was fetched, and there followed a very anxious hour, while various remedies were tried, and eventually oxygen revived him. He laid his head down on the pillow, smiled at me, and said, "Oh, what bliss! I feel absolutely comfortable—it's wonderful."

The doctor beckoned me out, and told me that I had better move my things across to the house and sleep there. "I don't like the look of things at all," he said; "your place is certainly here." He added that we had better wait until the morning before deciding whether the others should be sent for. I moved my things in, and had supper with the priests, who were very kind to me. They talked much about Hugh, of his gaiety and humour; and I saw that he had given his best to these friends of his, and lived with them in brotherly simplicity.

I did not then think he was going to die, and I certainly expected no sudden change. I ought, no doubt, to have realised that the doctors had done their best to prepare me for

his death; but the mind has an instinctive way of holding out the shield of hope against such fears.

I was told at this time that he was to be left quiet, so I merely slipped in at ten o'clock. Hugh was drowsy and resting quietly; he just gave me a nod and a smile.

The one thing which made me anxious, on thinking over our interviews in the course of the day, was this—that he seemed to have a preoccupation in his mind, though he had spoken cheerfully enough about various matters. It did not seem either a fear or an anxiety. It was rather that he knew that he might die, I now believe, and that he desired to live, and was thinking about all the things he had to do and wished to do, and that his trains of thought continually ended in the thought—"Perhaps I may not live to do them." He wished too, I thought, to reassure himself, and was pleased at feeling better, and at seeing that I thought him better than I had expected. He was a sensitive patient, the doctor said, and often suggested means of keeping up his strength. But he showed no

fear at any time, though he seemed like one who was facing a foe; like a soldier in the trenches with an enemy opposite him whom he could not quite discern.

However, I went off to bed, feeling suddenly very tired—I had been for thirty-six hours almost without sleep, and it seemed to me as if whole days had passed since I left Cambridge. My room was far away, a little plain cell in a distant corridor high up. I slept a little; when suddenly, through the glass window above my door, I saw the gleam of a light, and became aware that someone was rapidly drawing near in the corridor. In a moment Canon Sharrock tapped and entered. He said: "Mr. Benson, your brother is sinking fast—he has asked for you; he said, 'Is my brother anywhere near at hand?' and when I said yes that you were in the house, he said, 'Thank God!' Do not lose any time; I will leave the nurse on the stairs to light you." He went out, and I put on a few things and went down the great dark arches of the staircase, with a glimmering light below, and through the throne-room with the nurse. When I came in

I saw Hugh sitting up in bed; they had put a chair beside him, covered with cushions, for him to lean against. He was pale and breathing very fast, with the nurse sponging his brow. Canon Sharrock was standing at the foot of the bed, with his stole on, reading the last prayers from a little book. When I entered, Hugh fixed his eyes on me with a strange smile, with something triumphant in it, and said in a clear, natural voice, "Arthur, this is the end!" I knelt down near the bed. He looked at me, and I knew somehow that we understood each other well, that he wanted no word or demonstration, but was just glad I was with him. The prayers began again. Hugh crossed himself faintly once or twice, made a response or two. Then he said: "I beg your pardon—one moment—my love to them all." The big room was brightly lit; something on the hearth boiled over, and the nurse went across the room. Hugh said to me: "You will make certain I am dead, won't you?" I said "Yes," and then the prayers went on. Suddenly he said to the nurse: "Nurse, is it any good my resisting death—making any

effort?" The nurse said: "No, Monsignor; just be as quiet as you can." He closed his eyes at this, and his breath came quicker. Presently he opened his eyes again and looked at me, and said in a low voice: "Arthur, don't look at me! Nurse, stand between my brother and me!" He moved his hand to indicate where she should stand. I knew well what was in his mind; we had talked not long before of the shock of certain sights, and how a dreadful experience could pierce through the reason and wound the inner spirit; and I knew that he wished to spare me the pain of seeing him die. Once or twice he drew up his hands as though trying to draw breath, and sighed a little; but there was no struggle or apparent pain. He spoke once more and said: "I commit my soul to God, to Mary, and to Joseph." The nurse had her hand upon his pulse, and presently laid his hand down, saying: "It is all over." He looked very pale and boyish then, with wide open eyes and parted lips. I kissed his hand, which was warm and firm, and went out with Canon Sharrock, who said to me: "It was wonderful!

I have seen many people die, but no one ever so easily and quickly."

It was wonderful indeed! It seemed to me then, in that moment, strange rather than sad. He had been *himself* to the very end, no diminution of vigour, no yielding, no humiliation, with all his old courtesy and thoughtfulness and collectedness, and at the same time, I felt, with a real adventurousness —that is the only word I can use. I recognised that we were only the spectators, and that he was in command of the scene. He had made haste to die, and he had gone, as he was always used to do, straight from one finished task to another that waited for him. It was not like an end; it was as though he had turned a corner, and was passing on, out of sight but still unquestionably there. It seemed to me like the death of a soldier or a knight, in its calmness of courage, its splendid facing of the last extremity, its magnificent determination to experience, open-eyed and vigilant, the dark crossing.

XVII

BURIAL

We had thought that he should be buried at Manchester; but a paper of directions was found saying that he wished to be buried at Hare Street, in his own orchard, at the foot of his Calvary. My mother arrived on the Monday evening, and in the course of Tuesday we saw his body for the last time, in biretta and cassock, with a rosary in his hands. He looked strangely young, like a statue carved in alabaster, with no trace of pain or weariness about him, simply asleep.

His coffin was taken to the midnight train by the clergy of the Salford Cathedral, and from Buntingford station by my brother Fred to his own little chapel, where it rested all the Thursday. On the Friday the Cardinal came down, with Canons from Westminster and the choir. A solemn Requiem was sung. The Cardinal consecrated a grave, and he

THE CALVARY AT HARE STREET, 1913

The grave is to the left of the mound

was laid there, in the sight of a large concourse of mourners. It was very wonderful to see them. There were many friends and neighbours, but there were also many others, unknown to me and even to each other, whom Hugh had helped and comforted in different ways, and whose deep and visible grief testified to the sorrow of their loss and to the loyalty of their affection.

I spent some strange solitary days at Hare Street in the week which followed, going over from Cambridge and returning, working through papers and letters. There were all Hugh's manuscripts and notes, his books of sermons, all the written evidences of his ceaseless energy. It was an astonishing record of diligence and patient effort. It seemed impossible to believe that in a life of perpetual travelling and endless engagements he yet had been able to accomplish all this mass of work. His correspondence too—though he had evidently destroyed all private spiritual confidences—was of wide and varied range, and it was difficult to grasp that it yet represented the work of so com-

paratively few years. The accumulation also of little, unknown, unnamed gifts was very great, while the letters of grief and sympathy which I received from friends of his, whose very names were unknown to me, showed how intricate and wide his personal relations had been. And yet he had carried all this burden very lightly and easily. I realised how wonderful his power must have been of storing away in his mind the secrets of many hearts, always ready to serve them, and yet able to concentrate himself upon any work of his own.

In his directions, he spoke of his great desire to keep his house and chapel as much as possible in their present state. "I have spent an immense amount of time and care on these things," he said. It seemed that he had nearly realised his wish, by careful economy, to live at Hare Street quietly and without anxiety, even if his powers had failed him; and it was strange to walk as I did, one day when I had nearly finished my task, round about the whole garden, which had been so tangled and weed-choked a wilderness, and the house at first so ruinous and

bare, and to realise that it was all complete and perfect, a setting of order and peace. How insecure and frail the beautiful hopes of permanence and quiet enjoyment all seemed! I passed over the smooth lawn, under the leafless limes, through the yew-tree walk to the orchard, where the grave lay, with the fading wreaths, and little paths trodden in the grass; by the hazel hedge and the rose-garden, and the ranked vegetable rows with their dying flower-borders; into the chapel with its fantasy of ornament, where the lamp burned before the shrine; through the house, with its silent panelled rooms all so finely ordered, all prepared for daily use and tranquil delight. It seemed impossible that he should not be returning soon, in joyful haste, as he used to return, pleased to show his new designs and additions. But I could not think of him as having any shadow of regret about it all, or as coming back, a pathetic *revenant*, to the scene of his eager inventiveness. That was never his way, to brood over what had been done. It was always the new, the un-

touched, the untried, that he was in search of. Hugh never wished that he had done otherwise, nor did he indulge in the passion of the past, or in the half-sad, half-luxurious retrospect of the days that are no more. "Ah," I could fancy him saying, "that was all delightful while it lasted—it was the greatest fun in the world! But now!"—and I knew as well in my heart and mind as if he had come behind me and spoken to me, that he was moving rapturously in some new experience of life and beauty. He loved indeed to speak of old days, to recall them vividly and ecstatically, as though they were actually present to him; and I could think of him as even delighting to go over with me those last hours of his life that we spent together, not with any shadow of dread or shrinking, but just as it pleased Odysseus to tell the tale of how he sped down the whirlpool, with death beneath and death above, facing it all, taking it all in, not cherishing any delusion of hope, and yet enjoying it as an adventure of real experience which it was good to have tasted even so.

And when I came to look at some of his letters, and saw the sweet and generous things which he had said of myself in the old days, his gratitude for trifling kindnesses and gifts which I had myself forgotten, I felt a touch of sorrow for a moment that I had not been even nearer to him than I was, and more in his enlivening company; and I remembered how, when he arrived to see me, he would come lightly in, say a word of greeting, and plunge into talk of all that we were doing; and then I felt that I must not think of him unworthily, as having any grievance or shadow of concern about my many negligences and coldnesses: but that we were bound by ties of lasting love and trust, and shared a treasure of dear memories and kindnesses; and that I might leave his spirit in its newly found activities, take up my own task in the light of his vivid example, and look forward to a day when we might be again together, sharing recollection and purpose alike, as cheerfully and gladly as we had done in the good days that were gone, with all the added joy of the new dawn, and with the old understanding made more perfect.

XVIII

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Hugh was always youthful-looking for his age, light and quick in movement, intent but never deliberate, passing very rapidly from one thing to another, impatient of boredom and dullness, always desiring to do a thing that very minute. He was fair of complexion, with grey-blue eyes and a shock head of light hair, little brushed, and uncut often too long. He was careless of appearances, and wore clothes by preference of great shabbiness. He told me in 1909 that he had only bought one suit in the last five years. I have seen him, when gardening at Hare Street, wear a pair of shoes such as might have been picked up in a ditch after a tramp's encampment. At the same time he took a pleasure of a boyish kind in robes of state. He liked his Monsignor's purple, his red-edged cassock and crimson cincture, as a

soldier likes his uniform. He was in no way ascetic; and though he could be, and often seemed to be, wholly indifferent to food, yet he was amused by culinary experiments, and collected simple savoury recipes for household use. He was by far the quickest eater I have ever seen. He was a great smoker of cheap cigarettes. They were a natural sedative for his highly strung temperament. I do not think he realised how much he smoked, and he undoubtedly smoked too much for several years.

He was always quick, prompt, and decisive. He had an extraordinary presence of mind in the face of danger. My sister remembers how he was once strolling with her, in his cassock, in a lane near Tremans, when a motor came down the road at a great pace, and Roddy, the collie, trotted out in front of it, with his back turned to the car, unconscious of danger. Hugh took a leap, ran up hill, snatched Roddy up just in front of the wheels, and fell with him against the hedge on the opposite side of the road.

He liked a degree of comfort, and took great

pleasure in having beautiful things about him. "I do not believe that lovely things should be stamped upon," he once wrote to a friend who was urging the dangers of a strong sense of beauty; adding, "should they not rather be led in chains?" Yet his taste was not at all severe, and he valued things for their associations and interest as much as he did for their beauty. He had a great accumulation of curious, pretty, and interesting things at Hare Street, and took a real pleasure in possession. At the same time he was not in the least dependent on such things, and could be perfectly happy in bare and ugly rooms. There was no touch of luxuriousness about him, and the adornment of his house was one of the games that he played. One of his latest amusements was to equip and catalogue his library. He was never very much of a reader, except for a specific purpose. He read the books that came in his way, but he had no technical knowledge of English literature. There were many English classics which he never looked into, and he made no attempt to follow modern developments. But

he read books so quickly that he was acquainted more or less with a wide range of authors. At the same time he never wasted any time in reading books which did not interest him, and he knew by a sort of intuition the kind of books he cared about.

He was of late years one of the liveliest and most refreshing of talkers. As a boy and a young man he was rather silent than otherwise in the family circle, but latterly it was just the opposite. He talked about anything that was in his mind, but at the same time he did not wish to keep the talk in his own hands, and had an eager and delighted recognition of his companion's thoughts and ideas.

His sense of humour was unfailing, and when he laughed, he laughed with the whole of himself, loudly and contagiously, abandoning himself with tears in his eyes to helpless paroxysms of mirth. There was never the smallest touch of affectation or priggishness about his attitude, and he had none of the cautious and uneasy reverence which is apt to overshadow men of piety. He was intensely amused by the humorous side of the

people and the institutions which he loved. Here are two slight illustrations which come back to my mind. He told me these two stories in one day at Tremans. One was that of a well-known Anglican Bishop who attended a gathering of clergy, and in his valedictory speech said that they would expect him to make some allusion to the fact that one who had attended their last meeting was no longer of the Anglican communion, having joined the Church of Rome. They would all, he said, regret the step which he had thought fit to take; but they must not forget the serious fall their poor friend had had from his bicycle not long before, which had undoubtedly affected gravely his mental powers. Then he told me of an unsatisfactory novice in a religious house who had been expelled from the community for serious faults. His own account of it was that the reason why he was expelled was that he used to fall asleep at meditation, and snore so loud that he awoke the elder brethren.

Though Hugh held things sacred, he did not hold them inconveniently sacred, and it did

not affect their sacredness if they had also a humorous side to them. He had no temptation to be easily shocked, and though he hated all impure suggestiveness, he could be amused by what may be called broad humour. I always felt him to be totally free from prudishness, and it seemed to me that he drew the line in exactly the right place between things that might be funny and unrefined, and things which were merely coarse and gross. The fact was that he had a perfectly simple manliness about him, and an infallible tact, which was wholly unaffected, as to the limits of decorum. The result was that one could talk to him with the utmost plainness and directness. His was not a cloistered and secluded temperament. He knew the world, and had no fear of it or shrinking from it.

He dearly loved an argument, and could be both provoking and incisive. He was vehement, and hated dogmatic statements with which he did not agree. When he argued, he used a good deal of gesture, waving his hands as though to clear the air, emphasizing

what he said with little sweeps and openings of his hands, sometimes covering his face and leaning forwards, as if to gain time for the onset. His arguments were not so much clear as ingenious, and I never knew anyone who could defend a poor case so vigorously. When he was strained and tired, he would argue more tenaciously, and employ fantastic illustrations with great skill; but it always blew over very quickly, and as a rule he was good-tempered and reasonable enough. But he liked best a rapid and various interchange of talk. He was bored by slow-moving and solemn minds, but could extract a secret joy from pompous utterances, while nothing delighted him more than a full description of the exact talk and behaviour of affected and absurd people.

His little stammer was a very characteristic part of his manner. It was much more marked when he was a boy and a young man, and it varied much with his bodily health. I believe that it never affected him when preaching or speaking in public, though he was occasionally nervous about its doing

so. It was not, so to speak, a long and leisurely stammer, as was the case with my uncle, Henry Sidgwick, the little toss of whose head as he disengaged a troublesome word, after long dallying with a difficult consonant, added a touch of *friandise* to his talk. Hugh's stammer was rather like a vain attempt to leap over an obstacle, and showed itself as a simple hesitation rather than as a repetition. He used, after a slight pause, to bring out a word with a deliberate emphasis, but it never appeared to suspend the thread of his talk. I remember an occasion, as a young man, when he took sherry, contrary to his wont, through some dinner-party ; and when asked why he had done this, he said that it happened to be the only liquid the name of which he was able to pronounce on that evening. He used to feel humiliated by it, and I have heard him say, "I'm sorry—I'm stammering badly to-night!" but it would never have been very noticeable, if he had not alluded to it. It is clear, however, from some of his letters that he felt it to be a real disability in talk, and even fancied that it

made him absurd, though as a matter of fact the little outward dart of his head, as he forced the recalcitrant word out, was a gesture which his friends both knew and loved.

He learned to adapt himself to persons of very various natures, and indeed was so eager to meet people on their own ground that it seems to me he was to a certain extent misapprehended. I have seen a good many things said about him since his death which seem to me to be entire misinterpretations of him, arising from the simple fact that they were reflections of his companion's mood mirrored in his own sympathetic mind. Further, I am sure that what was something very like patient and courteous boredom in him, when he was confronted with some sentimental and egotistical character, was interpretated as a sad and remote unworldliness. Someone writing of him spoke of his abstracted and far-off mood, with his eyes indwelling in a rapture of hallowed thought. This seems to me wholly unlike Hugh. He was far more likely to have been considering

how he could get away to something which interested him more.

Hugh's was really a very fresh and sparkling nature, never insipid, intent from morning to night on a vital enjoyment of life in all its aspects. I do not mean that he was always wanting to be amused—it was very far from that. Amusement was the spring of his social mood; but he had a passion too for silence and solitude. His devotions were eagerly and rapturously practised; then he turned to his work. "Writing seems to me now the only thing worth doing in the world," he says in one of his letters when he was deep in a book. Then he flung himself into gardening and handicraft, back again to his writings, or his correspondence, and again to his prayers.

But it is impossible to select one of his moods, and to say that his true life lay there. His life lay in all of them. If work was tedious to him, he comforted himself with the thought that it would soon be done. He was an excellent man of affairs, never "slothful in business," but with great practical ability. He

made careful bargains for his books, and looked after his financial interests tenaciously and diligently, with a definite purpose always in his mind. He lived, I am sure, always looking forward and anticipating. I do not believe he dwelt at all upon the past. It was life in which he was interested. As I walked with my mother about the beautiful garden, after his funeral, I said to her: "It seems almost too pathetic to be borne that Hugh should just have completed all this." "Yes," she said, "but I am sure we ought to think only that it meant to him seven years of very great happiness." That was perfectly true! If he had been called upon to leave Hare Street to take up some important work elsewhere, he would certainly not have dwelt on the pathetic side of it himself. He would have had a pang, as when he kissed the doorposts of his room at Mirfield on departing. But he would have gone forward, and he would have thought of it no more. He had a supreme power of casting things behind him, and he was far too intent on the present to have indulged in sentimental reveries of what had been.

It is clear to me, from what the doctors said after his death, that if the pneumonia which supervened upon great exhaustion had been averted, he would have had to give up much of his work for a long time, and devote himself to rest and deliberate idleness. I cannot conceive how he would have borne it. He came once to be my companion for a few days, when I was suffering from a long period of depression and overwork. I could do nothing except answer a few letters. I could neither write nor read, and spent much of my time in the open air, and more in drowsing in misery over an unread book. Hugh, after observing me for a little, advised me to work quite deliberately, and to divide up my time among various occupations. It would have been useless to attempt it, for Nature was at work recuperating in her own way by an enforced listlessness and dreariness. But I have often since then thought how impossible it would have been for him to have endured such a condition. He had nothing passive about him; and I feel that he had every right to live his life on his own lines, to neglect warnings, to

refuse advice. A man must find out his own method, and take the risks which it may involve. And though I would have done and given anything to have kept him with us, and though his loss is one which I feel daily and constantly, yet I would not have it otherwise. He put into his life an energy of activity and enjoyment such as I have rarely seen. He gave his best lavishly and ungrudgingly. Even the dreadful and tragical things which he had to face he took with a relish of adventure. He has told me of situations in which he found himself, from which he only saved himself by entire coolness and decisiveness, the retrospect of which he actually enjoyed. "It was truly awful!" he would say, with a shiver of pleasing horror. But it was all worked into a rich and glowing tapestry, which he wove with all his might, and the fineness of his life seems to me to consist in this, that he made his own choices, found out the channels in which his powers could best move, and let the stream gush forth. He did not shelter himself fastidiously, or creep away out of the glare and noise. He took up the staff and scrip of pilgrimage, and,

while he kept his eyes on the Celestial City, he enjoyed every inch of the way, as well the assaults and shadows and the toils as the houses of kindly entertainment, with all their curious contents, the talk of fellow-pilgrims, the arbours of refreshment, until his feet touched the brink of the river, and even there he went fearlessly forward.

XIX

RETROSPECT

Now that I have traced the progress of Hugh's outer life from step to step, I will try to indicate what in the region of mind and soul his progress was, and I would wish to do this with particular care, even at the risk of repeating myself somewhat, because I believe that his nature was one that changed in certain ways very much; it widened and deepened greatly, and most of all in the seven last years of his life, when I believe that he found himself in the best and truest sense.

As a boy, up to the age of eighteen or nineteen, it was, I believe, a vivid and unreflective nature, much absorbed in the little pattern of life as he saw it, neither expansive nor fed upon secret visions. It was always a decided nature. He never, as a child, needed to be amused; he never said, "What shall I do? Tell me what to do!" He liked constant

companionship, but he had always got little businesses of his own going on; he joined in games, and joined keenly in them, but if a public game was not to his taste, he made no secret that he was bored, and, if he was released, he went off on his own errands. I do not remember that he ever joined in a general game because of any sociable impulse merely, but because it amused him; and if he separated himself and went off, he had no resentment nor any pathetic feeling about being excluded.

When he went on to school he lived a sociable but isolated life. His companions were companions rather than friends. He did not, I think, ever form a romantic and adoring friendship, such as are common enough with emotional boys. He did not give his heart away; he just took a vivid and animated interest in the gossip, the interplay, the factions and parties of his circle; but it was all rather a superficial life—he used to say that he had neither aims nor ambitions—he took very little interest in his work and not much interest in games. He just desired to escape censure,

and he was not greedy of praise. There was nothing listless or dreamy about it all. If he neglected his work, it was because he found talk and laughter more interesting. No string ran through his days; they were just to be taken as they came, enjoyed, dismissed. But he never wanted to appear other than he was, or to be admired or deferred to. There was never any sense of pose about him nor the smallest affectation. He was very indifferent as to what was thought of him, and not sensitive; but he held his own, and insisted on his rights, allowed no dictation, followed no lead. All the time, I suppose, he was gathering in impressions of the outsides of things—he did not dip beyond that: he was full of quite definite tastes, desires, and prejudices; and though he was interested in life, he was not particularly interested in what lay behind it. He was not in the least impressionable, in the sense that others influenced or diverted him from his own ideas.

Neither had he any strong intellectual bent. The knowledge which he needed he acquired quickly and soon forgot it. I do not think

he ever went deeply into things in those early days, or tried to perfect himself in any sort of knowledge. He was neither generous nor acquisitive; he was detached, and always rather apt to put his little possessions away and to forget about them. It was always the present he was concerned with; he did not deal with the past nor with the future.

Then after what had been not so much a slumber of the spirit as a vivid living among immediate impressions, the artistic nature began to awake in him. Music, architecture, ceremony, began to make their appeal felt; and he then first recognised the beauty of literary style. But even so, he did not fling himself creatively into any of these things at first, even as an amateur; it was still the perception of effects that he was concerned with.

It was then, during his first year at Cambridge, that the first promptings of a vocation made themselves felt towards the priesthood. But he was as yet wholly unaware of his powers of expression; and I am sure that his first leanings to the clerical life were a search

for a quiet and secluded fortress, away from the world, in which he might pursue an undisturbed and ordered life of solemnity and delicate impressions of a sacred sort of beauty. His desire for community life was caused by his decided dislike of the world, of fuss and tedium and conventional occupations. He was never in the least degree a typical person. He had no wish to be distinguished, or to influence other minds or lives, or to gain honour or consideration. These things simply appeared to him as not worth striving for. What he desired was companionship of a sympathetic kind and the opportunity of living among the pursuits he liked best. He never wished to try experiments, and it was always with a spectacular interest that he regarded the world.

His call was very real, and deeply felt, and he waited for a whole year to make sure of it; but he found full decision at last.

Then came his first ministerial work at the Eton Mission; and this did not satisfy him; his strength emerged in the fact that he did not adopt or defer to the ideals he found about

him: a weaker character would have embraced them half-heartedly, tried to smother its own convictions, and might have ended by habituating itself to a system. But Hugh was still, half unconsciously, perhaps, in search of his real life; he did not profess to be guided by anyone, nor did he ever suspend his own judgment as to the worth of what he was doing; a manly and robust philanthropy on Christian lines was not to his taste. His instinct was rather for the beautiful element in religion and in life, and for a mystical consecration of all to God. That did not seem to him to be recognised in the work which he was doing. If he had been less independent, he might have crushed it down, and come to view it as a private fancy. He might have said to himself that it was plain that many human spirits did not feel that more delicate appeal, and that his duty was to meet other natures on some common ground.

It is by such sacrifices of personal bias that much of the original force of the world is spoiled and wasted. It may be a noble sacrifice, and it is often nobly made. But

Hugh was not cast in that mould. His effectiveness was to lie in the fact that he could disregard many ordinary motives. He could frankly admire other methods of work, and yet be quite sure that his own powers did not lie in that direction. But though he was modest and not at all self-assertive, he never had the least submissiveness nor subservience; nor was he capable of making any pretences.

Sometimes it seems to happen that men are punished for wilfulness of choice by missing great opportunities. A nature which cannot compromise anything, cannot ignore details, cannot work with others, is sometimes condemned to a fruitless isolation. But it would be wrong to disregard the fact that circumstances more than once came to Hugh's aid; I see very clearly how he was, so to speak, headed off, as by some Fatherly purpose, from wasting his life in ineffectual ways. Probably he might have worked on at the Eton Mission, might have lost heart and vigour, might never have discovered his real powers, if he had not been rescued. His ill-

ness at this juncture cut the knot for him; and then followed a time of travel in Egypt, in the Holy Land, which revived again his sense of beauty and width and proportion.

And then followed his Kemsing curacy; I have a letter written to me from Kemsing in his first weeks there, in which he describes it as a paradise, and says that, so far as he can see, it is exactly the life he most desires, and that he hopes to spend the rest of his days there.

But now I feel that he took a very real step forward. The danger was that he would adopt a dilettante life. He had still not discovered his powers of expression, which developed late. He was only just beginning to preach with effect, and his literary power was practically undeveloped. He might have chosen to live a harmless, quiet, beauty-loving life, kindly and guileless, in a sort of religious æstheticism; though the vivid desire for movement and even excitement that characterised his later life would perhaps have in any case developed.

But something stronger and sterner awoke

in him. I believe that it was exactly because the cup, mixed to his taste, was handed to him that he was able to see that there was nothing that was invigorating about the potion. It was not the community life primarily which drew him to Mirfield; it was partly that his power of speech awoke, and more strongly still the idea of self-discipline.

And so he went to Mirfield, and then all his powers came with a rush in that studious, sympathetic, and ascetic atmosphere. He was in his twenty-eighth year. He began by finding that he could preach with real force and power, and two years later, when he wrote *The Light Invisible*, he also discovered his gift of writing; while as a little recreation, he took up drawing, and produced a series of sketches, full of humour and delicacy, drawn with a fine pen and tinted with coloured chalk, which are at all events enough to show what he could have done in this direction.

XX

ATTAINMENT

And then Hugh made the great change of his life, and, as a Catholic, found his dreams realised and his hopes fulfilled. He found, indeed, the life which moves and breathes inside of every faithful creed, the power which supplements weakness and represses distraction, the motive for glad sacrifice and happy obedience. I can say this thankfully enough, though in many ways I confess to being at the opposite pole of religious thought. He found relief from decision and rest from conflict. He found sympathy and confidence, a sense of corporate union, and above all a mystical and symbolical devotion embodied in a great and ancient tradition, which was visibly and audibly there with a movement like a great tide, instead of a scheme of worship which had, he thought, in the Anglican Church, to be eclectically constructed

by a group or a circle. Every part of his nature was fed and satisfied ; and then, too, he found in the Roman Catholic community in England that sort of eager freemasonry which comes of the desire to champion a cause that has won a place for itself, and influence and respect, but which is yet so much opposed to national tendencies as to quicken the sense of active endeavour and eager expectation.

After his quiet period of study and thought in Rome and at Llandaff House, came the time when he was attached to the Roman Catholic Church in Cambridge; and this, though not congenial to him, gave him an insight into methods and conditions; and all the while his own forces and qualities were learning how to concentrate and express themselves. He learned to write, he learned to teach, to preach, to speak, to be his own natural self, with all his delicate and ingenuous charm, in the presence of a great audience ; so that when at last his opportunity came to free himself from official and formal work, he was able to throw all his trained faculties into the work which he had at heart. Moreover, he found in direction

and confession, and in careful discussion with inquirers, and in sympathetic aid given to those in trouble, many of the secret sorrows, hopes, and emotions of the human heart, so that his public work was enforced and sustained by his ever-increasing range of private experience.

He never, however, took whole-heartedly to pastoral work. He said frankly that he "specialised" in the region of private direction and advice; but I doubt if he ever did quite enough general pastoral work of a commonplace and humdrum kind to supplement and fill out his experience of human nature. He never knew people under quite normal conditions, because he felt no interest in normal conditions. He knew men and women best under the more abnormal emotion of the confessional; and though he used to maintain, if challenged, that penitence was a normal condition, yet his judgment of human beings was, as a consequence, several times gravely at fault. He made some unwise friendships, with a guileless curiosity, and was obliged, more than once, to extricate himself by summary abandonments.

He wrote of himself once, "I am tired to death of giving myself away, and finding out too late. . . . I don't like my tendency to agree with people wildly; my continual fault has been to put on too much fuel." Like all sensitive people, who desire sympathetic and friendly relations, he was apt to discover the best of new acquaintances at once, and to evoke in them a similarly genial response. It was not till later, when the first conciliatory impulse had died down, that he discovered the faults that had been instinctively concealed, and indeed repressed by his own personal attractiveness.

He had, too, an excessive confidence in his power of managing a critical situation, and several times undertook to reform people in whom corruption had gone too far for remedy. He believed in his power of "breaking" sinners by stern declarations; but he had more than once to confess himself beaten, though he never wasted time in deploring failures.

Mr. Meynell, in his subtle essay which prefaces my brother's little book of poems, speaks of the complete subjugation of his will. If I

may venture to express a different view, I do not feel that Hugh ever learned to efface his own will. I do not think his temperament was made on the lines of self-conquest. I should rather say that he had found the exact *milieu* in which he could use his will to the best effect, so that it was like the charge of powder within the gun, no longer exploding itself vaguely and aimlessly, but all concentrated upon one intense and emissive effort. Because the one characteristic of the last years of his life was his immense enjoyment of it all. He wrote to a friend not long before the end, when he was feeling the strain upon him to be heavier than he could bear; after a word or two about the war—he had volunteered to go to the front as a chaplain—he said, "So I am staying here as usual; but the incessant demands on my time try me as much as shrapnel and bullets." That sentence seems to me to confirm my view that he had not so much sacrificed as devoted himself. He never gained a serene patience; I have heard him over and over again speak with a sigh of his correspondence and the

demands it made on him; yet he was always faithful to a relation once formed; and the number of letters written to single correspondents, which have been sent me, have fairly amazed me by their range, their freshness, and their fullness. He was deeply interested in many of the letters he received, and gave his best in his prompt replies; but he evidently also received an immense number of letters from people who did not desire guidance so much as sympathy and communication. The inconsiderate egotism of unimaginative and yet sensitive people is what creates the burden of such a correspondence; and though he answered his letters faithfully and duly, and contrived to say much in short space, yet he felt, as I have heard him say, that people were merciless; and much of the time he might have devoted to creative work, or even to recreation, was consumed in fruitless toil of hand and mind. And yet I am sure that he valued the sense that he could be useful and serviceable, and that there were many who depended upon him for advice and consolation. I believe that his widespread re-

lations with so many desirous people gave him a real sense of the fullness and richness of life and its relations. But for all that, I also believe that his courtesy and his sense of duty were even more potent in these relations than the need of personal affection. I do not mean that there was any hardness or coldness about him; but he valued sympathy and tranquil friendship more than he pursued intimacy and passionate devotion. Yet in the last year or two of his life, I was both struck and touched by his evident desire to knit up friendships which had been severed, and to renew intercourse which had been suspended by his change of belief. Whether he had any feeling that his life was precarious, or his own time short, I do not know. He never said as much to me. He had, of course, used hard words of the Church which he had left, and had said things which were not wholly impersonal. But, combative though he was, he had no touch of rancour or malice in his nature, and he visibly rejoiced in any sign of goodwill.

Yet even so, he was essentially solitary in mind. "When I am alone," he once wrote, "I

am at my best; and at my worst in company. I am happy and capable in loneliness; unhappy, distracted, and ineffective in company." And again he wrote, "I am becoming more and more afraid of meeting people I want to meet, because my numerous deficiencies are so very apparent. For example, I stammer slightly always and badly at times."

This was, I believe, more an instinctive shrinking from the expenditure of nervous force than anything else, and arose from the feeling that, if he had to meet strangers, some brilliancy of contribution would be expected of him. I remember how he delighted in the story of Marie Bashkirtseff, who, when she was summoned to meet a party of strangers who desired to see her, prayed as she entered the room, "Oh God, make me worth seeing!" Hugh disliked the possibility of disappointing expectations, and thus found the society of unfamiliar people a strain; but in family life, and with people whom he knew well, he was always the most delightful and charming of companions, quick, ready, and untiring in talk. And therefore I imagine that, like all artistic

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people, he found that the pursuit of some chosen train of thought was less of a conscious effort to him than the necessity of adapting himself, swiftly and dexterously, to new people, whose mental and spiritual atmosphere he was obliged to observe and infer. It was all really a sign of the high pressure at which he lived, and of the price he paid for his vividness and animation.

Another source of happiness to him in these last days was his sense of power. This was a part of his artistic nature; and I believe that he enjoyed to the full the feeling of being able to give people what they wanted, to enchant, interest, move, and sway them. This is to some natures a great temptation, because they come to desire applause, and to hunger for tangible signs of their influence. But Hugh was marvellously saved from this, partly by a real modesty which was not only never marred, but which I used to think increased with the years. There is a story of William Morris, that he could read aloud his own poetry, and at the end of a fine stanza would say: "That's jolly!" with an entire

freedom from conceit, just as dispassionately as he could praise the work of another. I used to feel that when Hugh mentioned, as I have heard him do, some course of sermons that he was giving, and described the queue which formed in the street, and the aisles and gangways crowded with people standing to hear him, that he did so more impersonally than anyone I had ever heard, as though it were a delightful adventure, and more a piece of good luck than a testimony to his own powers.

It was the same with his books; he wished them to succeed and enjoyed their success, while it was an infinite delight to him to write them. But he had no egotism of a commonplace sort about him, and he never consciously tried to succeed. Success was just the reverberating echo of his own delight.

And thus I do not look upon him as one who had bent and curbed his nature by stern self-discipline to do work of a heavy and distasteful kind; nor do I think that his dangerous devotion to work was the fierce effort of a man who would have wished to rest, yet

felt that the time was too short for all that he desired to do. I think it was rather the far more fruitful energy of one who exulted in expressing himself, in giving a brilliant and attractive shape to his ideas, and who loved, too, the varieties and tendencies of human nature, enjoyed moulding and directing them, and flung himself with an intense joy of creation into all the work which he found ready to his hand.

XXI

TEMPERAMENT

Hugh never seemed to me to treat life in the spirit of a mystic or a dreamer, with unshared and secret experiences, withdrawing into his own ecstasy, half afraid of life, rapt away into interior visions. Though he had a deep curiosity about mystical experiences, he was never a mystic in the sense that he had, as great mystics seem to have had, one shell less, so to speak, between him and the unseen. He lived in the visible and tangible world, loving beautiful secrets; and he was a mystic only in the sense that he had an hourly and daily sense of the presence of God. He wished to share his dreams and to make known his visions, to declare the glory of God and to show His handiwork. He found the world more and more interesting, as he came to know it, and in the light of the warm welcome it gave him. He had a keen and delicate apprehension of spiritual beauty, and the Mass

became to him a consummation of all that he held most holy and dear. He had recognised a mystical presence in the Church of England, but he found a supernatural presence in the Church of Rome; yet he had, too, the instinct of the poet, to translate into form and substance his inmost and sweetest joy, and to lavish it upon others. No one dares to speak of great poets and seers as men who have profaned a mystery by making it known. The deeper that the poet's sense of beauty is, the more does he thirst to communicate it. It is far too divine and tremendous to be secretly and selfishly enjoyed.

It is possible, of course, that Hugh may have given to those who did not see him constantly in everyday familiar intercourse the sense of a courteous patience and a desire to do full justice to a claim. Still more may he have given this impression on social occasions and at conventional gatherings. Interviews and so-called festivities were apt to be a weariness to him, because they seemed so great an expenditure of time and force for very scanty results; but I always felt him to be one of the

most naturally courteous people I have ever seen. He hated to be abrupt, to repel, to hurt, to wound feelings, to disappoint; yet on such occasions his natural courtesy was struggling with a sense of the waste of time involved and the interruptions caused. I remember his writing to me from the Catholic rectory when he was trying to finish a book and to prepare for a course of sermons, and lamenting that he was "driven almost mad" by ceaseless interviews with people who did not, he declared, want criticism or advice, but simply the luxury of telling a long story for the sake of possible adulation. "I am quite ready to see people," he added, "if only they would ask me to appoint a time, instead of simply flinging themselves upon me whenever it happens to be convenient to them."

I do not think he ever grudged the time to people in difficulties when he felt he could really help and save. That seemed to him an opportunity of using all his powers; and when he took a soul in hand, he could display a certain sternness, and even ruthlessness, in dealing with it. "You need not consult me at

all, but if you do you must carry out exactly what I tell you," he could say; but he did grudge time and attention given to mild sentimentalists, who were not making any way, but simply dallying with tragic emotions excitedly and vainly.

This courtesy was part of a larger quality, a certain knightly and chivalrous sense, which is best summed up in the old word "gentleman." A priest told me that soon after Hugh's death he had to rebuke a tipsy Irishman, who was an ardent Catholic and greatly devoted to Hugh. The priest said, "Are you not ashamed to think that Monsignor's eye may be on you now, and that he may see how you disgrace yourself?" To which, he said, the Irishman replied, with perhaps a keener insight into Hugh's character than his director, "Oh no, I can trust Monsignor not to take advantage of me. I am sure that he will not come prying and spying about. He always believed whatever I chose to tell him, God bless him!" Hugh could be hard and unyielding on occasions, but he was wholly incapable of being suspicious, jealous, malicious, or spiteful. He made friends once with a man

of morbid, irritable, and resentful tendencies, who had continued, all his life, to make friends by his brilliance and to lose them by his sharp, fierce, and contemptuous animosities. This man eventually broke with him altogether, and did his best by a series of ingenious and wicked letters to damage Hugh's character in all directions. I received one of those documents and showed it to Hugh. I was astonished at his courage and even indifference. I myself should have been anxious and despondent at the thought of such evil innuendoes and gross misrepresentations being circulated, and still more at the sort of malignant hatred from which they proceeded. Hugh took the letter and smiled. "Oh," he said, "I have put my case before the people who matter, and you can't do anything. He is certainly mad, or on the verge of madness. Don't answer it—you will only be drenched with these communications. I don't trouble my head about it." "But don't you mind?" I said. "No," he said, "I'm quite callous! Of course I am sorry that he should be such a beast, but I can't help that. I have done my best to make it up—but it's hopeless."

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And it was clear from the way he changed the subject that he had banished the whole matter from his mind. At a later date, when the letters to him grew more abusive, I was told by one who was living with him, that he would even put one up on his chimney-piece and point it out to visitors.

I always thought that he had a very conspicuous and high sort of courage, not only in facing disagreeable and painful things, but in not dwelling on them either before or after. This was never more entirely exemplified than by the way he faced his operation, and, indeed, most heroically of all, in the way in which he died. There was a sense of great adventure —there is no other word for it—about that, as of a man going on a fateful voyage; a courage so great that he did not even lose his interest in the last experiences of life. His demeanour was not subdued or submissive; he did not seem to be asking for strength to bear or courage to face the last change. He was more like the happy warrior

"Attired
With sudden brightness, as a man inspired."

He did not lose control of himself, nor was he carried helplessly down the stream. He was rather engaged in a conflict which was not a losing one. He had often thought of death, and even thought that he feared it; but now that it was upon him he would taste it fully, he would see what it was like. The day before, when he thought that he might live, there was a pre-occupation over him, as though he were revolving the things he desired to do; but when death came upon him unmistakably there was no touch of self-pity or impressiveness. He had just to die, and he devoted his swift energies to it, as he had done to living. I never saw him so splendid and noble as he was at that last awful moment. Life did not ebb away, but he seemed to fling it from him, so that it was not as the death of a weary man sinking to rest, but like the eager transit of a soldier to another part of the field.

"Could it have been avoided?" I said to the kind and gentle doctor who saw Hugh through the last days of his life, and loved him very tenderly and faithfully. "Well, in one sense, 'yes,'" he replied. "If he had worked less,

rested more, taken things more easily, he might have lived longer. He had a great vitality; but most people die of being themselves; and we must all live as we are made to live. It was Monsignor's way to put the work of a month into a week; he could not do otherwise—I cannot think of Monsignor as sitting with folded hands."

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